HOUSE of the SUN

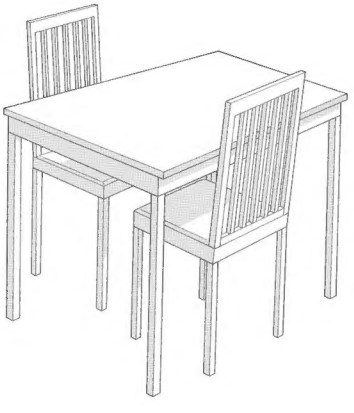
1

Taamo

HOUSE of the SUN

1

by Taamo



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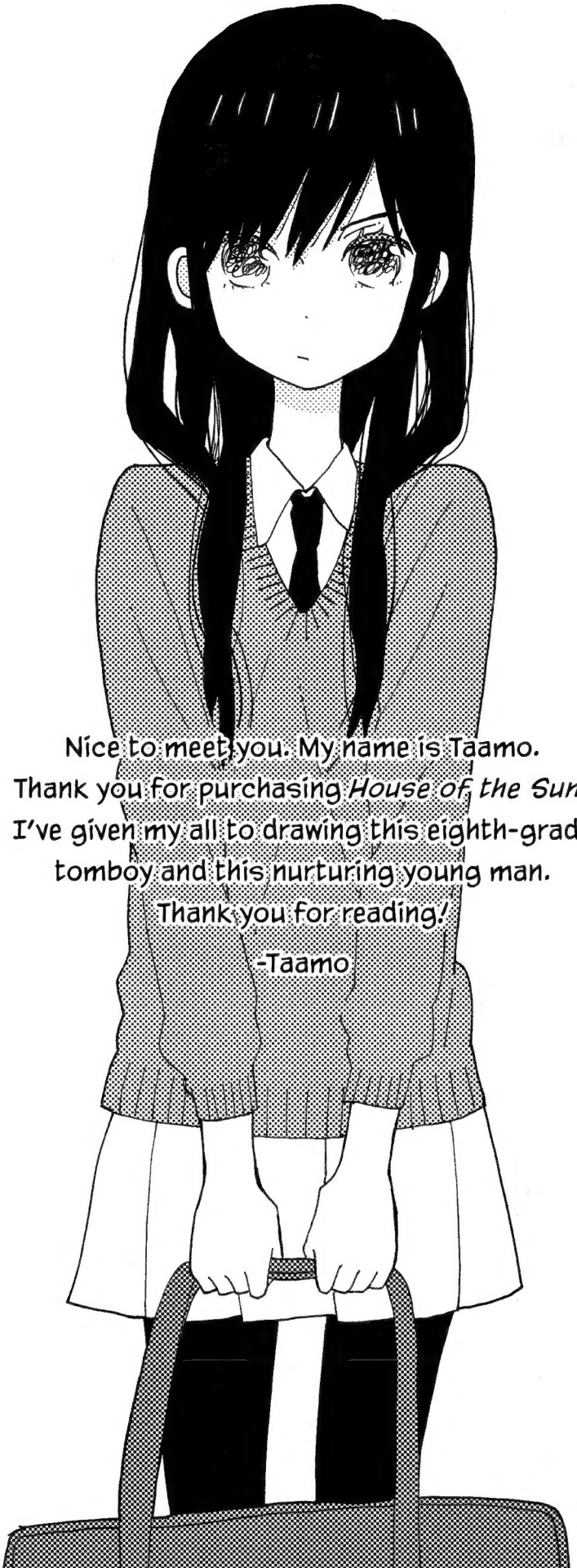
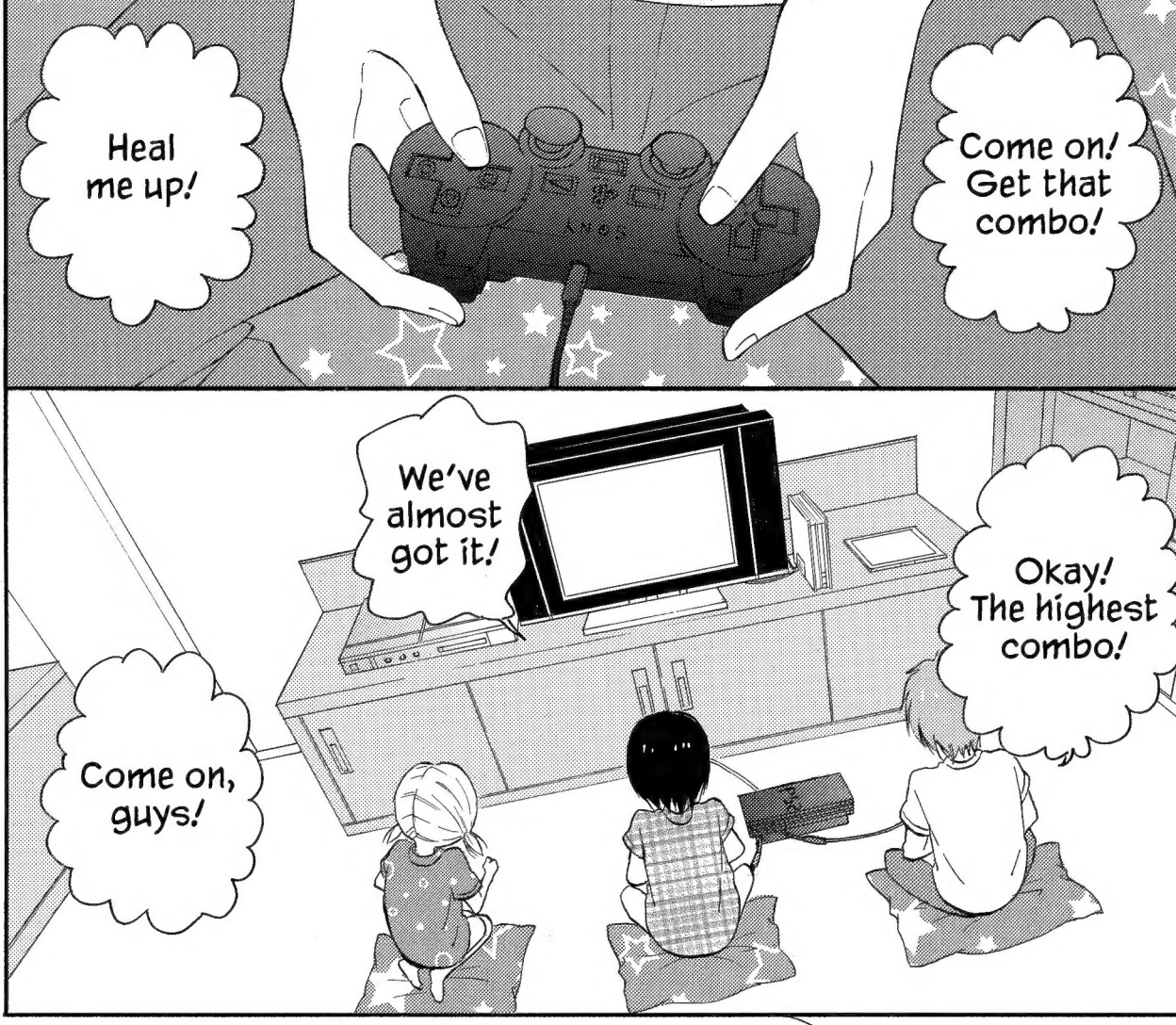
story 1 The Lonely Girl and the Lonely Boy



Nice to meet you. My name is Taamo.
Thank you for purchasing *House of the Sun!*
I've given my all to drawing this eighth-grade tomboy and this nurturing young man.
Thank you for reading!

-Taamo

This used to be a magical house, where I would end up laughing even if I went there crying. I always believed there had to be a magic spell on that house.


Heal me up!
Come on! Get that combo!
We've almost got it!
Okay! The highest combo!
Come on, guys!

ボコッ!! WHAM
ボコッ!! WHAM
Ouch!
Ouch!
I'm gonna use my skills!

Wanna eat dinner, Magyo?
GRR
Are you guys still playing video games?
Enough already!
Argh... Hiro...
PISSED
プーンプーン
My name's Mao, not Magyo!
Calm down. Magyo is cute, okay?
So, do you wanna eat or not?
...
No, thanks.
Don't be so stubborn and just eat.
I'm not being stubborn! I'm fine!
Thanks for the food!

CHATTER わいの
Where's the dressing, Mom?
Please get it yourself.
CHATTER わいの
Make sure to eat your fish, too. You always leave yours on the plate uneaten.
CHATTER わいの
Hmph.
ごくっ GULP
My mom must be waiting for me, so I'll go home now.
... ...
FIDGET もじ
FIDGET もじ
FIDGET もじもじ
FIDGET
FIDGET もじ
Mao-chan, you aren't eating?
Oh? What's wrong?

Okay?
I see.
Come back to play anytime.
...my parents were rarely home.
At my house...
480円
のり弁
Heat up in the microwave before eating.
I'm home.
Your father and I work for your sake, Mao.
MUNCH
モグ
モグ
MUNCH
It doesn't make a noise while it's nuking...
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP

That's right. Mom and Dad have to work for my sake.
TMP
TMP
TMP
Welcome back!
CLATTER
I'm home.
Oh, you're home.
Yeah...
I thought you'd eat at the Nakamura house again.
But you left me a boxed lunch.
So I heated it up and gulped it down.
You mean you "ate" it, right?!
Don't start talking like your dad!

...
I'm sorry.
What's wrong?
Oh, you can't come in.
Who's that?
That's not Dad.
But I'm pretty sure...
This man is...
...I shouldn't ask.

...the person I will be getting remarried to.

It's Mao, you jerk!
Magyo...
Just call me Mao, already!
How many years are we gonna do this for?
All right, Miss Mao, Miss Mao.
Ouch.
SHOVE!
Why are you sitting next to me? Go away!
Stop acting like a jerk...!

I wanna keep warm!
I feel like playing a game right here.
You can sit farther away!
I wonder what the store is selling today...
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
You should go home if you're cold.
...
ZAP
ZAP
ZAP

He feels warm...
My mom and dad...
...are getting a divorce.
So they asked me to choose who I'll live with.
No matter who I choose, we'll be leaving the house right away.

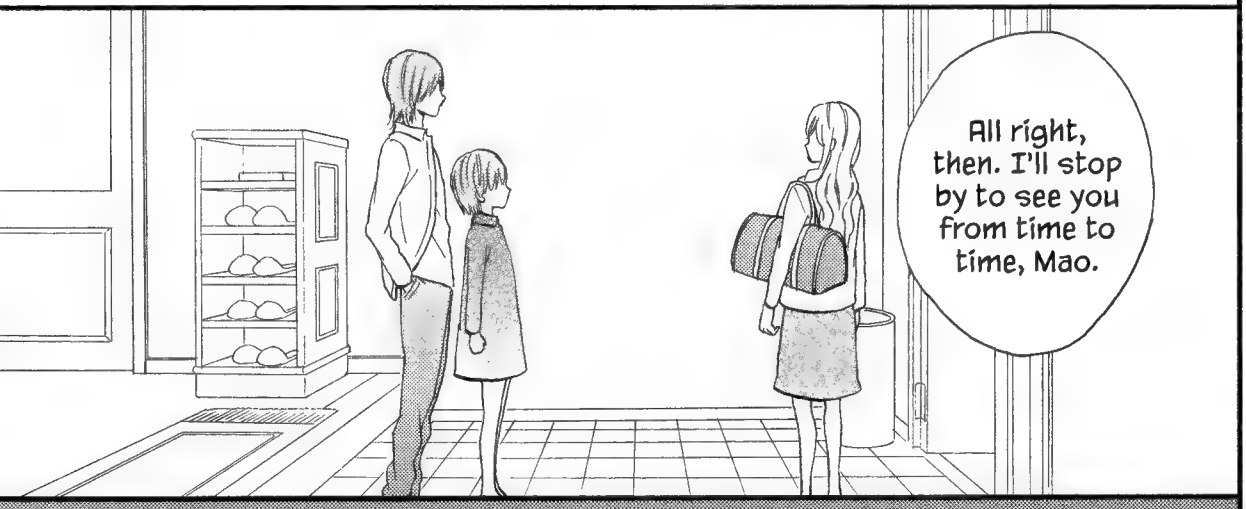
Sigh.
How about you come live at our house instead of choosing?
I can't do that, you idiot!

When he said those words...

...the truth is, I felt really happy.

I held back on saying "thank you," though...

...and just kept looking down.



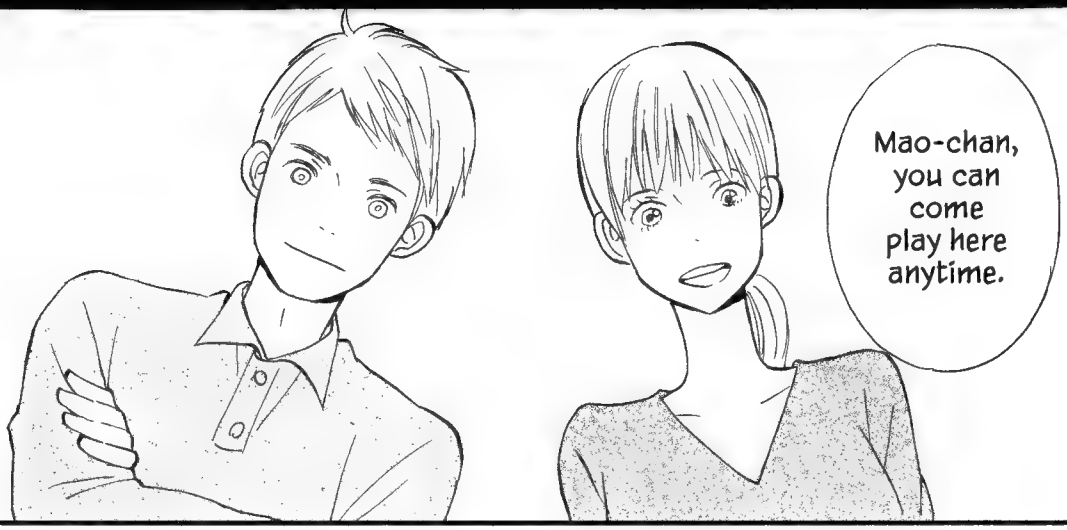
In the end, rather than go with my mom and that stranger...

...I chose to stay with my dad, whom I'd hardly ever said a word to.

I always felt sorry for myself and wished I could live with them.

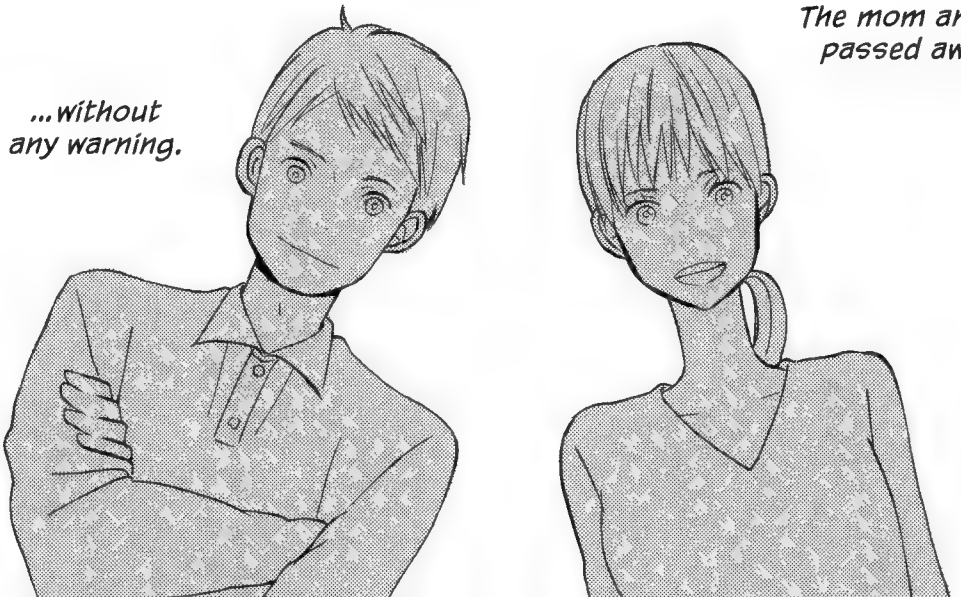
My dad and I moved two train stations away, but I still ended up going to the Nakamura house even more than before.

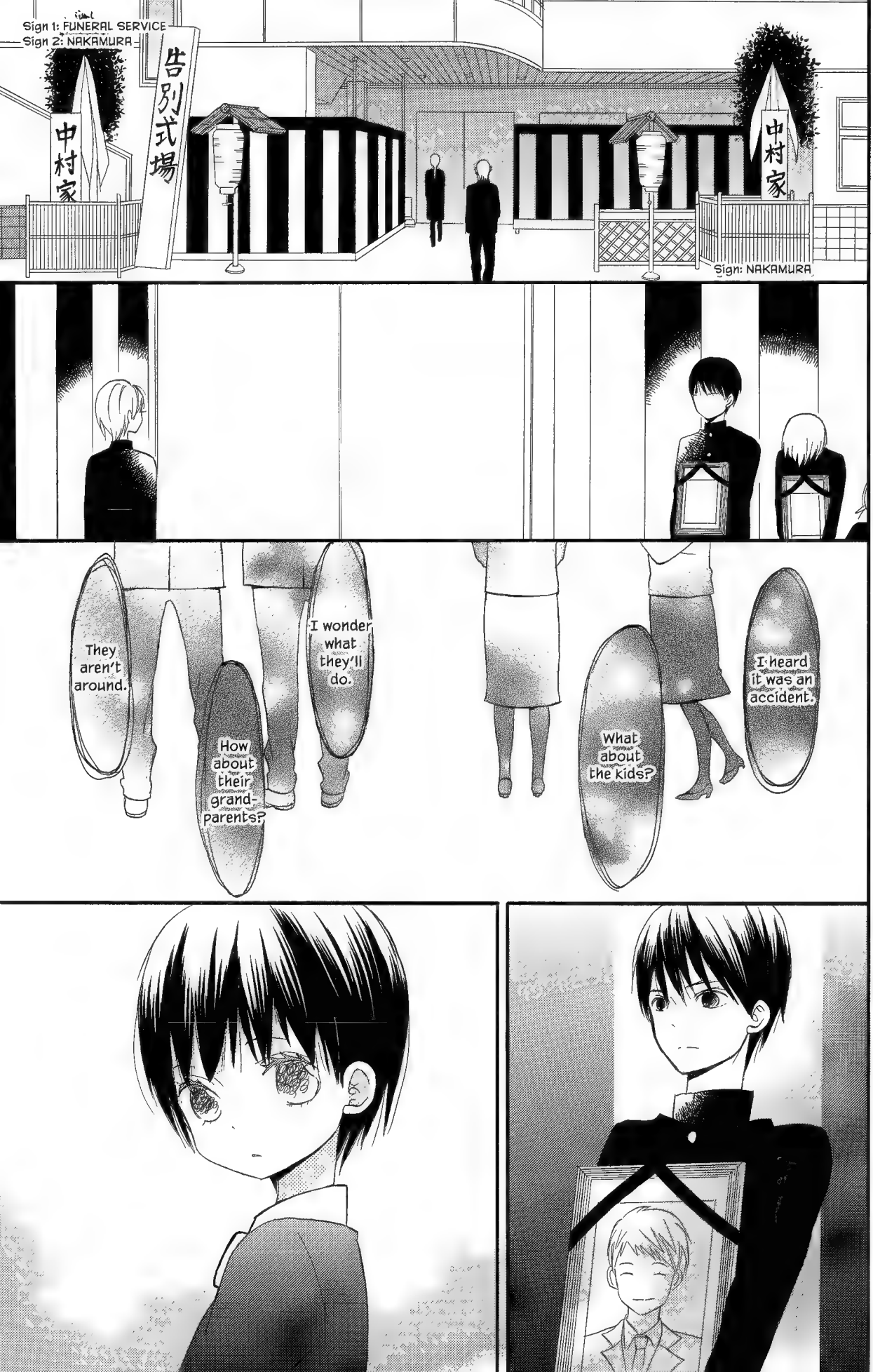
I ended up paying for it, though.



The mom and dad passed away...

...without any warning.




Sign 1: FUNERAL SERVICE
Sign 2: NAKAMURA
告別式場
中村家
中村家
Sign: NAKAMURA
They aren't around.
How about their grandparents?
I wonder what they'll do.
What about the kids?
I heard it was an accident.

He said he wants to protect their home.
It seems that the eldest, Hiro-kun, is going to stay in that house.
The two younger kids will be taken in by relatives.
They'll all be separated. It's sad.
This is the last memorable conversation I had with my dad.
ACHOO!
SLURP

17 years old, spring
It makes me sneeze when I look at the sun.
Not you?
No way!
A few years later
Another sneeze?
Is your dad getting remarried?
He already did.
Oh, right, you said you have a step-sibling?

Bye.
See you later.
You read that?
Bwahaha
Your house is like that online novel...
What's it called again?
I was doing surprisingly well...
I enjoyed our time together.
I still didn't speak much with my dad, but...
And lastly, of course...
What's more, I had fun posting an online autobiography.
It's a secret...

Magyo, what are you doing here?
Huh?
Wanna go eat together?
Your house isn't this way, is it?
Are you heading home?
Be quiet!
How can you be so rude to someone who's worried about you?
Is that how you act at school?!
I have something to do!
You're annoying. Don't talk to me!

Work...
I said be quiet! You still have to work, don't you?! Hurry up and get back to work!
ARGH
Don't tell me to be quiet! As a girl, you should be more tactful!
ARGH
Ouch!
MUSS
You're a piece of work! You really are!
MUSS
Work hard, okay?
Heh heh.
So annoying!
Right... I have another meeting to go to now.

Still, I don't mind having him touch my head...
0 0
ドキン DOKI

My hair's a mess now!
You get what you deserve.

I would never dare say that I worry about him living alone, yet I find myself occasionally going to check in on him.
For some reason, I can't help but wonder about this guy.
Do you see this happy face?
Heh heh.
What is it?
What's that smirk for?
SMIRK
Take it in! My little sister is coming home!
Hurray! Hurray!
Cool.
You should be happier.
Come celebrate with us! I'm gonna bake a cake.

So, Magyo, you've got a new mom now, right?
There you go, mouthing off again...!
I hate sweets! And who the hell bakes a cake, gross!
I'm worried about you, idiot.
It's none of your business!
I'm fine.
I'm different from you.
...

You!
See you later!
I didn't really want to go home.
So I got back pretty late...
All right...
...

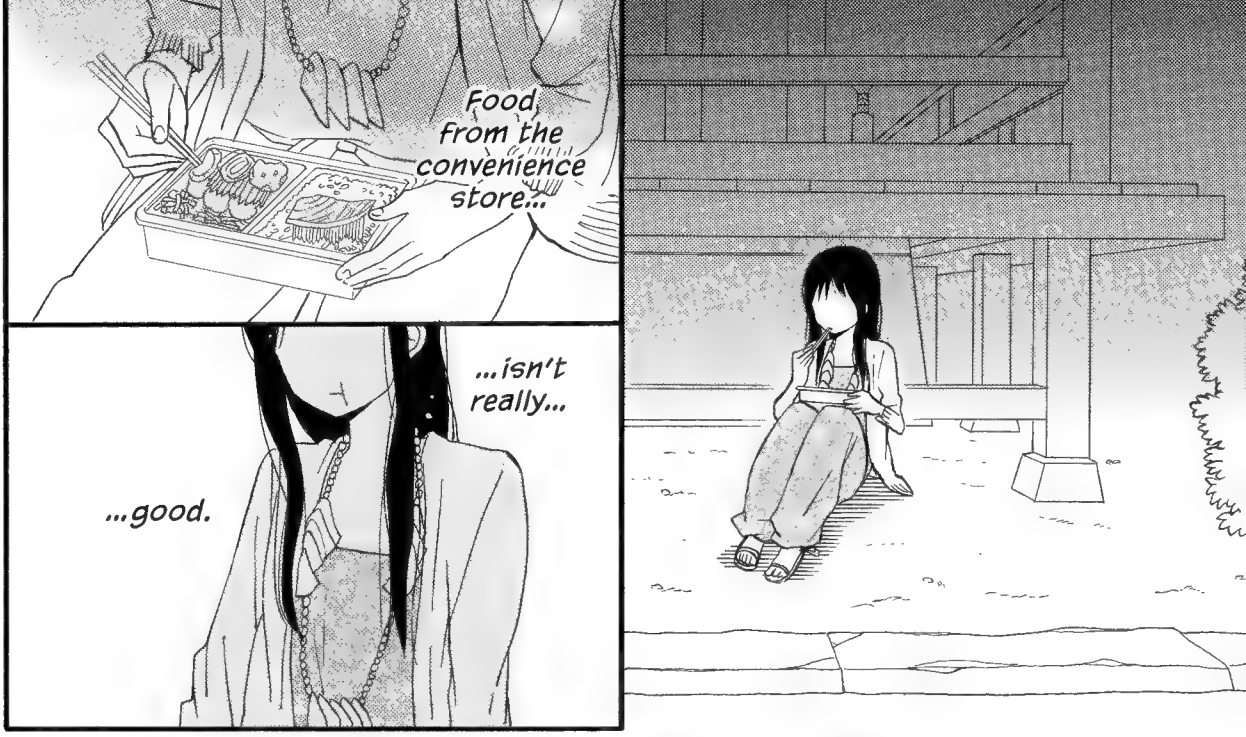
So that kid's dog ran out of the house...
...got the ball and brought it back.
What a smart dog.
I want a dog, too!
I'm home!
...
Welcome back.
Mao-chan, have you eaten? Are you hungry?
Ah... Um...

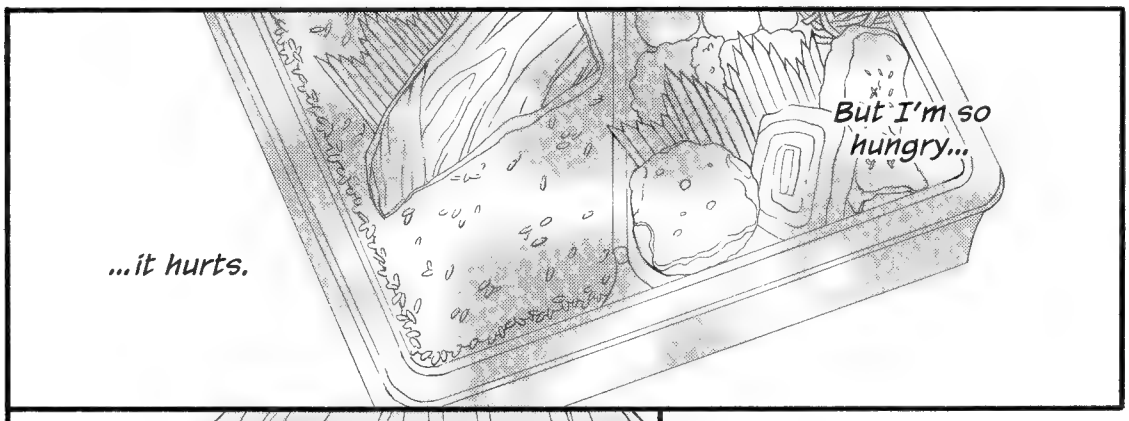
That's...
...my chair...
I ate out already.
You should call if you're gonna eat out.

バタン
SLAM
...
Sorry.
バタン
SLAM
So after that, the dog...
TMP
タン
TMP
タン
TMP
タン

SLIDE
ずる
SLIDE
ずる
SLIDE
ずる
Kya ha ha ha...
きゃはは
Yeah
うん
で
わ
So then...

I love you, Dad!
They'll get angry if I leave the house now.
I'm hungry...
ぐるるる
RUMBLE
TAP
たん
TAP
TAP
たん
たん
I'm going out for a bit!
わはははは
Ha ha ha!
Really...

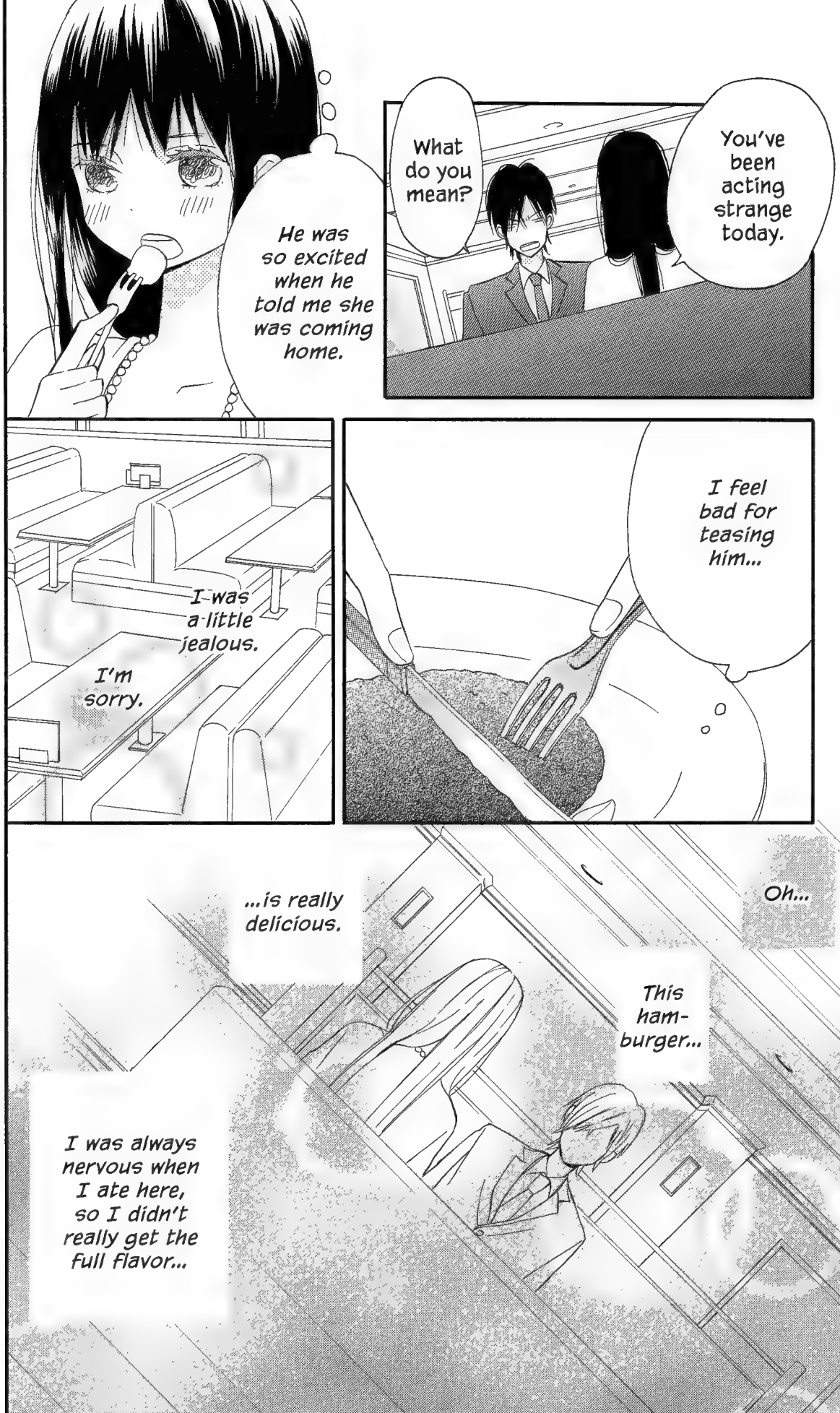

Food from the convenience store...
...isn't really...
...good.


But I'm so hungry...
...it hurts.

...I'm about to cry.
Oh, I think...
It hurts.
I can't taste anything.
My throat is tightening up.
Magyo?
What are you doing?
All right, let's go!
...
...

Were you crying?
What's going on?
I said, let's go eat together! Okay?
That boxed lunch isn't dinner.
What?
I guess I just imagined it, then.
I wasn't crying!
...
どんっ
BAM
どんっ
BAM
どんっ
BAM

I love the hamburg steak.
It's delicious.
You're eating too much.
I'm still growing, you know.
Why would you ask me that?
So annoying!
How about your new mom's hamburg steak?
Do you cook together? Is it fun?
Huh?
Sorry... Turns out my little sister won't be coming home, so I was just wondering how things were on your side.


He was so excited when he told me she was coming home.
What do you mean?
You've been acting strange today.
I was a little jealous.
I'm sorry.
I feel bad for teasing him...
Oh...
This ham-burger...
...is really delicious.
I was always nervous when I ate here, so I didn't really get the full flavor...

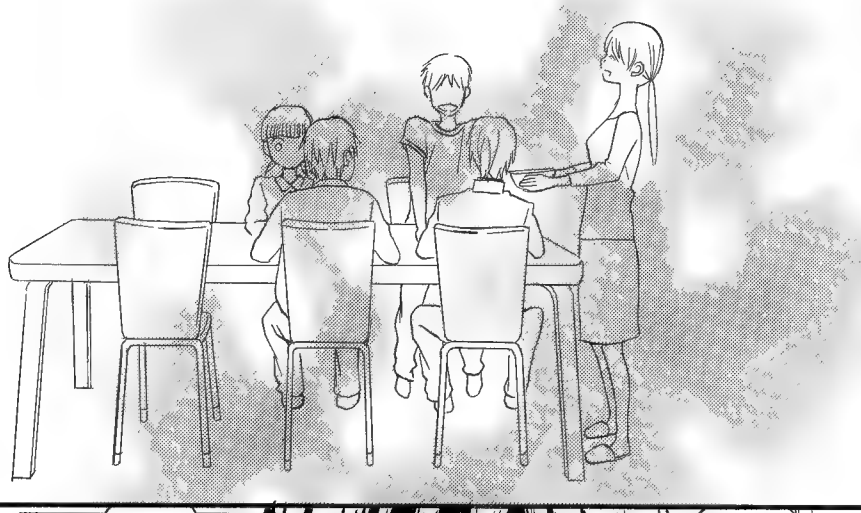
It really is.
It's delicious.
Huh?
もぞ"
もぞ"

BLOW
ふし
BLOW
ふし
BLOW
ふし
I bet you don't even have a handkerchief on you!
I don't have anything!
It's gone.
I don't have one! I'm sorry!
My home is gone.

There's nowhere for me...
...to go home to.
Then let's go home together, okay?

Huh?
My house, of course.
...
Where?
What are you saying?! I don't get it! And you're gross!
Are you just saying that to amuse yourself?!
I'll take care of telling your dad.
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
Wait! I'll go!
5, 4, 3, 2...
So what do you want to do? Are you gonna come or not?

You don't have to tell me!
Get inside already!
...
I cleaned my sister's room, so you can use it.



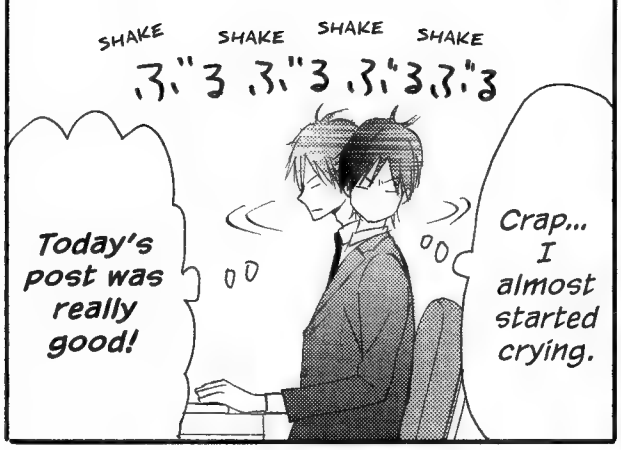
What are you doing?
...

Am I supposed to cuddle up to you?
What am I supposed to do now?
Whatever! Go to sleep!
You wanted to before, so that's why I asked!
Go to sleep!
I didn't ask you to come for that, so calm down.
Huh? What are you saying?
If you get lonely, you can talk to me.
GRIP
ゆう

I didn't really understand what happened...
But...
Good night!
Thank you!
TMP
TMP
TMP
It smells like sunshine.
...
Today...
But...
NOTES
The bed felt so warm that I slept surprisingly well.
ENTER
挿 漢 全 残512
CAPITAL
MULTI
FUNCTIONS
SELECT
DRAW

story 2 The Start of Their Lonely Journey Together

I didn't have a home anymore. There was nowhere for me to call my own. No one was waiting for me, and I was no longer important to anyone.


SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE
ふ"ぅ ふ"ぅ ふ"ぅ ふ"ぅ
Today's post was really good!
Crap... I almost started crying.

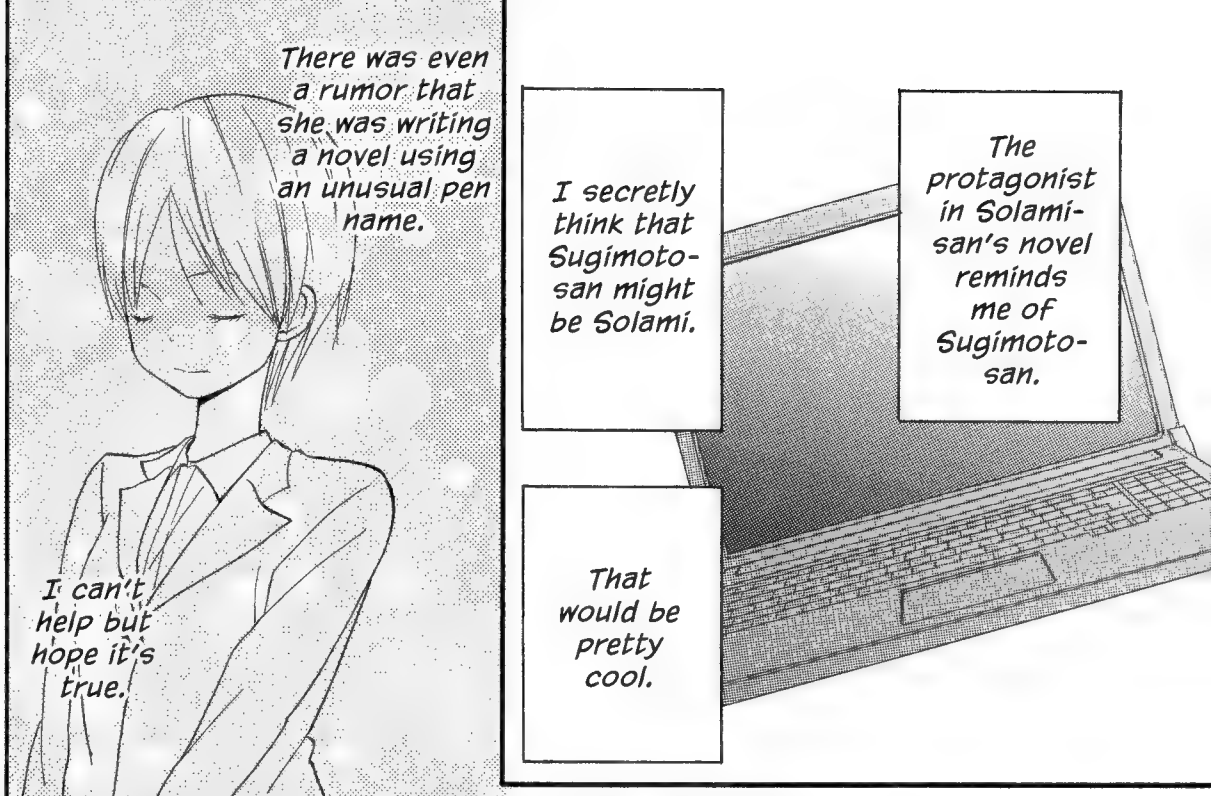
...!

I'll send her a comment when I get home today.
Solami-san's words pierce me like a needle.
SERIOUS

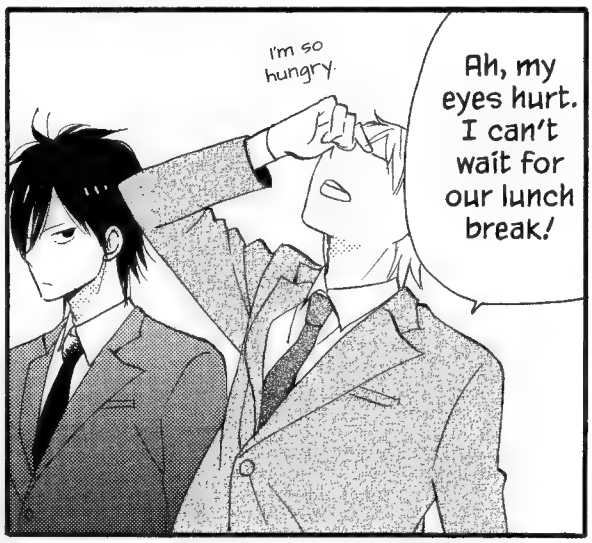
Yes?
Nakamura-san.

I went to Okinawa the other day. Here's a souvenir.
Please take it.

I'm so happy...!
Just "thank you"?
Oh, thank you.
Hiro Naka-mura.
Panty Cookies
What an odd gift, though...
Is this a joke?
My only solaces at work are...
New program-mer, 23 years old.
The House of the Sun by Solami-san.
I got hooked on the online novel after coming across it at work.
It's embarrassing, so I'll keep it a secret.
...this online novel.
...Sugimoto-san's smile and...


There was even a rumor that she was writing a novel using an unusual pen name.
I can't help but hope it's true.
I secretly think that Sugimoto-san might be Solami.
The protagonist in Solami-san's novel reminds me of Sugimoto-san.
That would be pretty cool.

I had company for breakfast today, so I'm not that hungry yet.
I ate a ton.


Ah, my eyes hurt. I can't wait for our lunch break!
I'm so hungry.

But my sister...
Oh!
Never mind.

Oh? So your sister moved back home, after all!
That's great.

My sister...
She's super annoying.
Just really noisy, you know?
How nice. She must be excited
Yeah, she's excited.
My sister is...
How Hiro is actually feeling right now
Mao!
I got carried away and ended up taking in a high school girl.
Well, she's always been around and feels like family, after all.
TAP
TAP
There's no way I could just let her be.
Also...

Like this!
Like this, okay?
Here.
Not "here"! Hold your utensils properly!
Mao...
...where's your left hand?
Also, you have to go to school.
I'm gonna borrow a friend's uniform.
Don't act so nonchalant, and eat your fish.
You must not be getting any attention from the ladies.
I just don't meet that many.
Hiro.
You're so annoying.
Argh!
Argh!
Anyway, you're holding your chopsticks wrong!
It's easier this way!

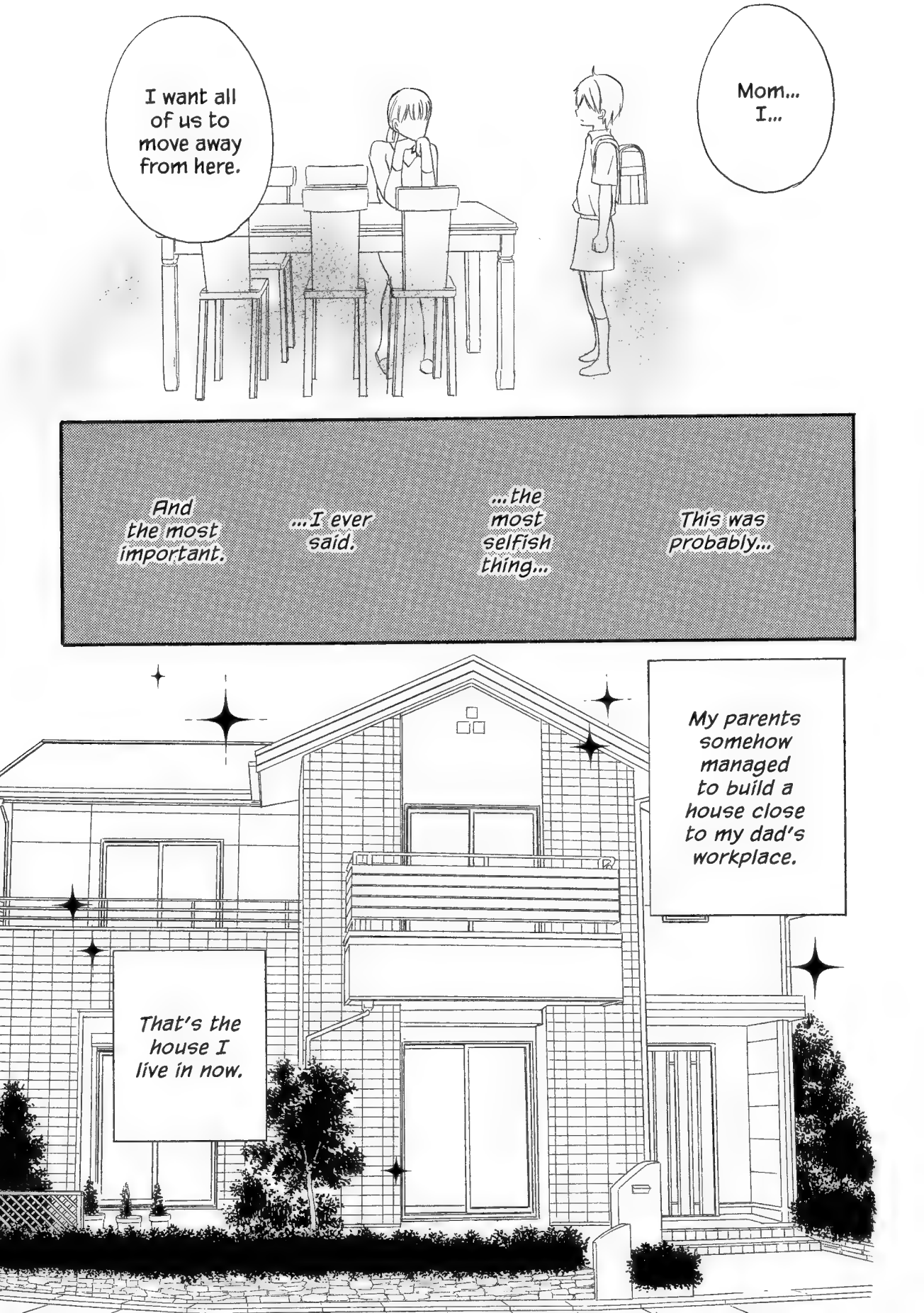
Let's learn how to hold chopsticks properly.

Hiro, you're about to start middle school.

ぱく
CHOMP
Try eating it.
Grab the fish sausage now.
Okay, okay, Hina and Daiki, too.
Me, too! Me, too!
See, you can do it!
I'm sorry.
Oh...
We're eating dinner with Dad tonight, so I want to hold my chopsticks properly!

Dad won't be able to make it home tonight.
We'll have dinner together another time.
Before we lived in this house, we lived in a house that was far away from Dad's workplace.
So he didn't come home much.
What? No way! No! No!
Hina, I'll make you cream puffs, so don't cry, okay?
Ha ha ha!
No way!
Sob, sob...
My sister Hina stopped crying when I made her sweets.
My brother Daiki didn't talk much except when he played video games.
I think he was lonely.

I got good grades and watched over my siblings.
I was a pretty good kid.
As for me...
I'm home!
Dad said he can't make it again tonight.
Oh, welcome back.


I want all of us to move away from here.
Mom... I...
And the most important.
...I ever said.
...the most selfish thing...
This was probably...
My parents somehow managed to build a house close to my dad's workplace.
That's the house I live in now.

We have a mortgage on it, after all!
Let's all take good care of this house.
Ha ha ha, that's true.
We're all together now.
ぎゅむ
SQUEEZE
Dad, you'll be coming home now, right?
Yes, I will.

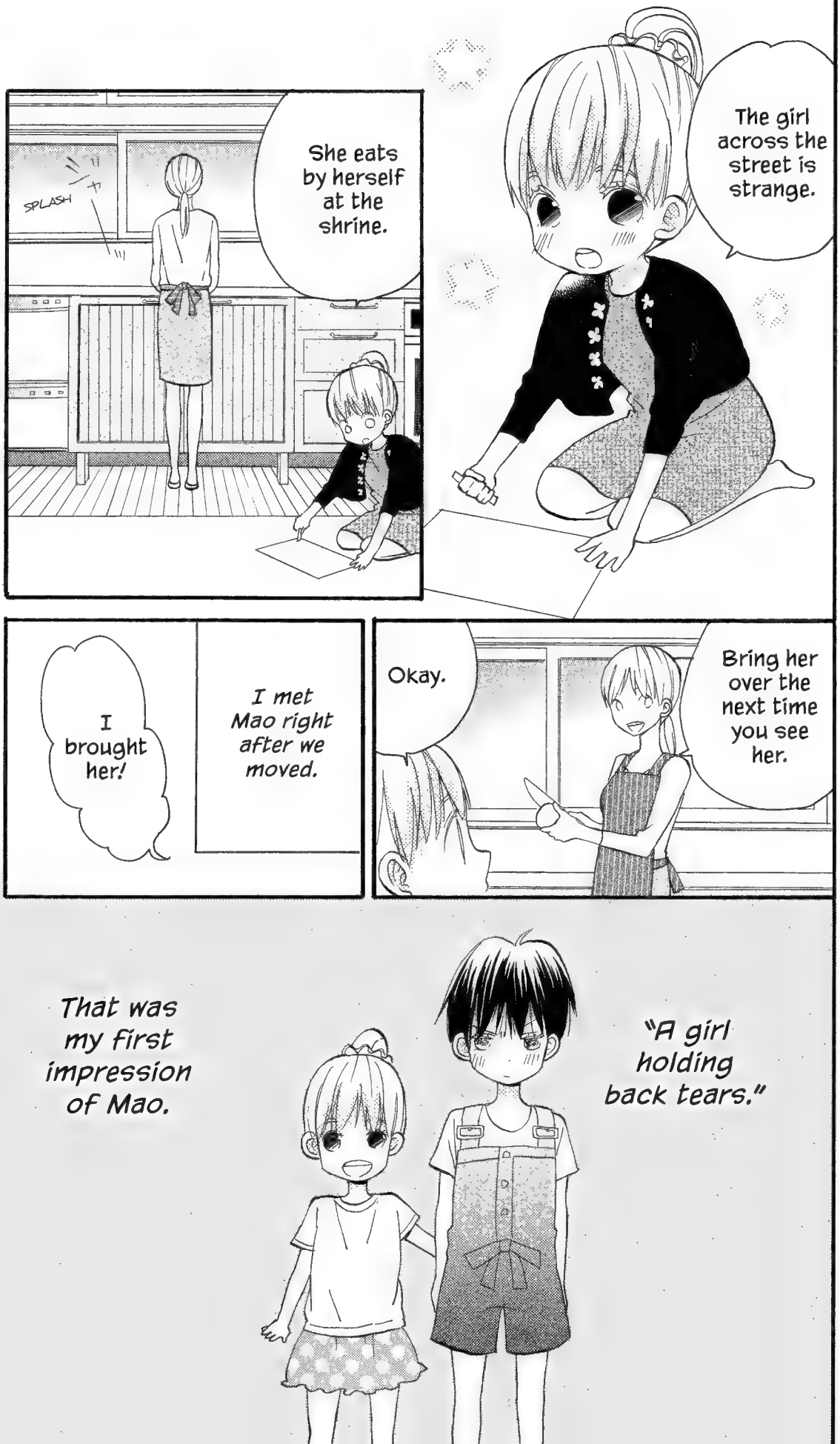
I was happy.

...missed my dad...

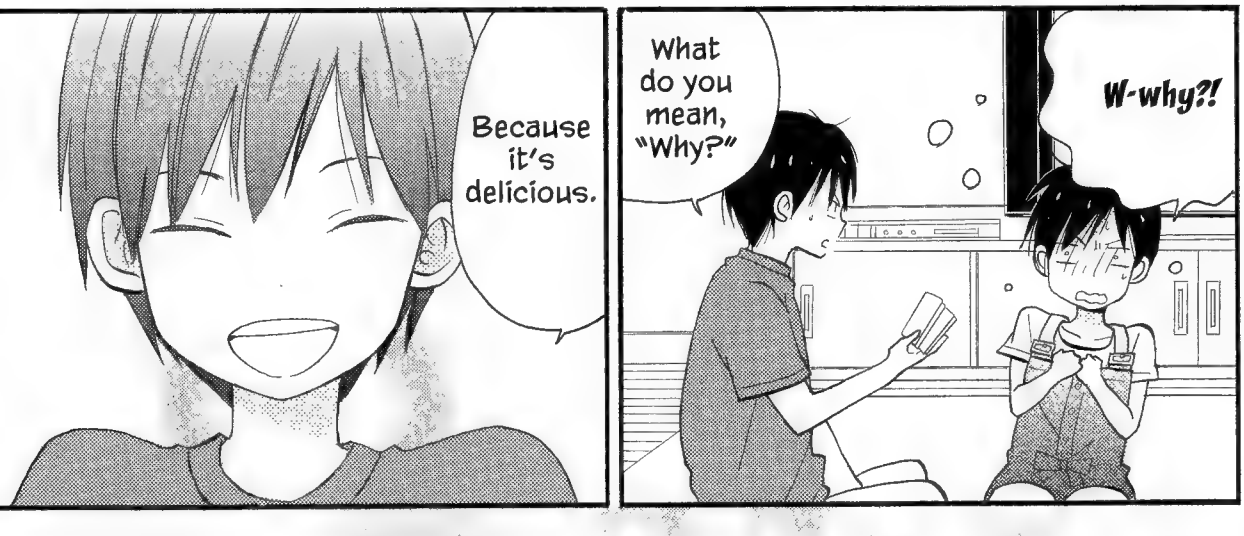
The truth is...

...a lot.

...I had also...

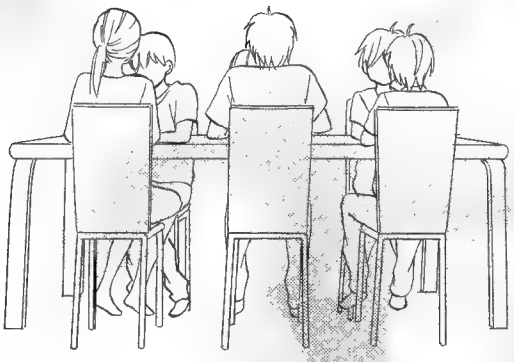

SPLASH
She eats by herself at the shrine.
The girl across the street is strange.
I brought her!
I met Mao right after we moved.
Okay.
Bring her over the next time you see her.
That was my first impression of Mao.
"A girl holding back tears."

Mao!
Magyo?
Mao.
It's written with the characters for "truth" and "fish."
Why do you always eat at the shrine?
Because I heard there's a god there.
I thought the god might be lonely all by himself.
Huh? What about your family?
They work hard for my sake, so they aren't home much.
They're really important.
Huh?
Dinner's ready.



Before I knew it, it felt like we were family.

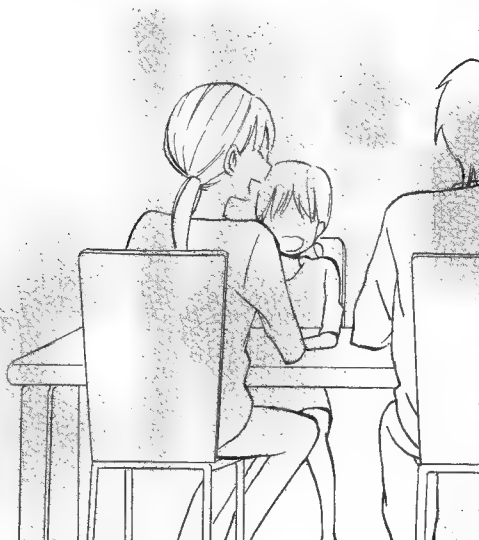
After that, Mao just kind of tumbled into our lives.



I asked them, and we made a promise.

That's right.

I want to see everyone smiling in this house again.



So even though our parents died and we all got separated...
...I insisted that I would work while I was still in school.
There's no way I'd ever leave this house.
YAWN
Your sister again? I'm almost done, too.
I'm almost done...
My sister...
That's right.
Ugh, my eyes hurt.
It's always been that way.
She doesn't really get along well with her dad.

I was relieved when I heard she was gonna have a stepmom.
KER-CHAK
She always shows up in this neighborhood when things get tough. It makes her easy to read.
She's here again.
Seeing her like that reminded me...
...of when she used to eat alone at the shrine.
That's why I ended up inviting her to my place like the old days.
I noticed how she smiled again.

Oh, she must not have eaten yet. She must be hungry.
My sister texted me that there were no clean towels... I wonder if she found one.
ガタタン
RATTLE
そわそわ
FIDGET
FIDGET
ガタタン
RATTLE
No way!
ばっ
FWIP
Huh?!
You keep complaining, but you're smiling. Having your sister around really makes you happy, huh?
ガタタン
RATTLE
RATTLE
ガタタン…

...but there's something fun about it.
People may misunderstand...
...being able to care for someone.
It's true that it's kind of fun...
I'm buying way more cream puffs than usual.
That's definitely fun.
I'll take ten, actually!
Oh!
When I thought Hina was coming back...
...I got carried away preparing her room.
Three cream puffs, please.

I'm home.
...
AHEM
Welcome back!

MESSY
FWUMP
I couldn't find a towel...
I texted you that they're under the right shelf!
I didn't know which right shelf...
Then you should've texted me again!
Argh! You try to act all cool, but you just end up acting crazy!
What do you mean, "cool"?

Anyway, I bought cream puffs! Eat one!
Cream puffs are sweet.
Huh?
I don't like sweets.
How many times have I told you?
Don't all girls like sweets?
Where'd you hear that?

I'll go home.
You're going back tonight, right?
Then take these back to your house.
Me, lonely?
But if you're gonna be lonely, I can stay.
Just a little.
Yeah, I'm lonely.

But your family must miss you, too.
Huh?
...
Dad?
It's Mao.
Hello?
Let's call them.
...
Sorry, I ended up sleeping over at Hiro's house last night.

Today, I'll...
You like it at the Nakamura house?
You've always liked it over there.
Since you like it so much, there's no need for you to come home.

Hey.
What's wrong, Mao?
TMP
TMP
TMP
I'm fine.
I'll go grab my bag.
?
Mao is acting strange.
Her dad must be angry, after all.
TAP
TAP
I didn't explain it properly yesterday.
I guess an explanation wouldn't make a difference...
Now, what should I say to him...
Hello, this is Hiro Nakamura.
I'm calling to apologize about last night.
Is Mao doing okay?
Yes, of course.

I'll pay you rent, of course.
Mao likes your place, so would you mind letting her stay there?
Why have you always been like this?!

Did he say that to Mao, too?
SIGH
ピッ
BEEP
We'll go see her dad together.
I'll make sure...

And that, really, he's been waiting for her.
He'll tell her that she has a home to go back to.
...that he'll talk to her.

That's what parents are for.
Mao.
I want you to stay here.

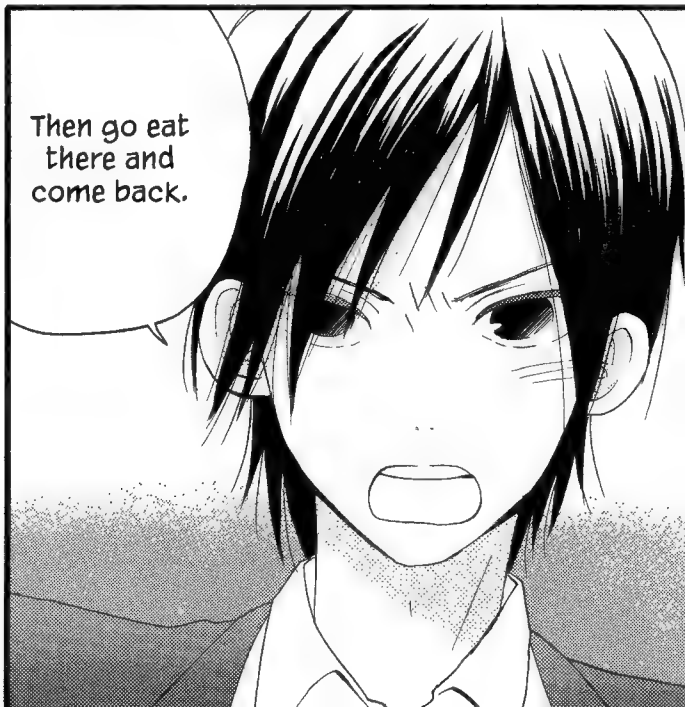
What'd you say?

Huh? What did I just say?

I get along great with my stepmom!
He didn't mean it!

Did my dad say something to you?

Why?

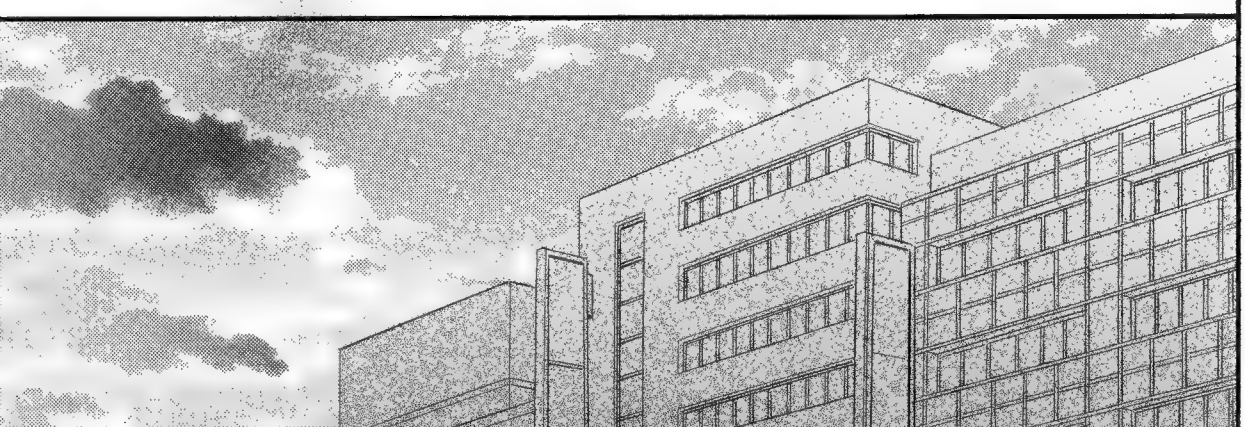

Then go eat there and come back.

Because the food's good.
W-why are you crying?
Do you want a cream puff?
No, thanks.
I don't want a cream puff.
But I'd like some dinner.

...Mao returned with a big suitcase, her dad in tow.
That night...
Her dad handed over what he called "rent for this month" and left.
It felt so natural, as though it really was my little sister coming home.
I didn't have the guts to yell at him.

It's "Mao"!
Welcome home, Magyo.

I'm back.



Nakamura.
Let's go for a drink after work.
Oh, sorry, I can't.
Oh, right, your sister is staying with you.
I keep forgetting.
That's right.
Remember already.
Saying "I'm home" and "welcome home"...
It's pretty nice.
I'm home!
?
She didn't say "Welcome home."
I'm home!

むわぁ
HMPH
!!
What's that horrible smell?
It smells like someone...
...died?!
Is Mao... okay?
WHAM
Mao!

Welcome home...
GLOMP
Mao, don't die!
...
What were you doing? What's that smell?
Thank God...! You're okay...
No!
Hold on! I'll take care of it.
The smell is coming from that table...

It's hamburg steak.
DOOOOM
Did you say...
...ham-burger?!
SLAM
CHOMP
THUD
!
CHOMP
SNICKER

It's not my fault! It's the first time I've ever made it! Don't make that face and laugh at me!
It stinks, too.
It tastes awful.
You're a terrible cook.
Ha ha ha ha!

You scared me.

NOTES
The food I cooked was delicious. It was so good I almost cried from laughter.
ENTER

story 3

April Fireworks

I've decided on a curfew.
Can't you see my crest?!
...
Listen to me. Your curfew is 7:00 PM. You can watch TV until 11:00, and lights out is at 12:00.
If you're gonna live in this house, you gotta follow the rules.
Nooo! Yashichi just revealed his identity!
BZZ
Turn off the TV!

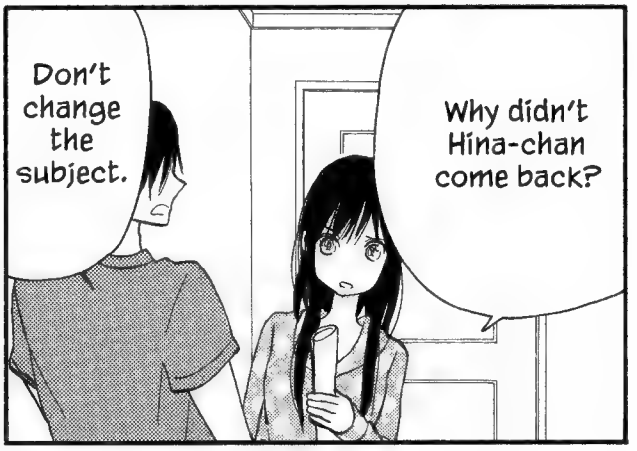
It's all laid out in here, so read it over.
Don't you dare complain about it or say I'm annoying.
GRRR
ゆっ
Makes no difference to me.
You're so annoying!
No, I'm not. Now, are you gonna take your bath first or wait till I'm done?
Are you sure you don't care?
Yeah, I can just refill the bath.

Hiro's gonna use the same bathwater?
かぽ
FWP
I thought you didn't care either way?
No way!
We're conserving water, so that's not allowed.
If you want a fresh bath, you go in first.
Then it's decided.
I'll go in second!
すくっ
STAND
You pervert! I'll make you pay!
UGH
UGH
Enough with the Mito Komon impersonation.*
I'll prepare the bath, and you clean it up.

* *Mito Komon* is a Japanese period drama.

MESSY
ちゃあ
Do you even know how to do that?
All right then, let's tidy up.
I'd cleaned Hina's room pretty thoroughly, you know.

...


Why didn't Hina-chan come back?
Don't change the subject.

I'm asking for real.
Seems pretty important to me.

The plan was for Hina to come back her third year of middle school and prepare for her exams here, but she said she wants to stay where she's at until the last moment.
Hiro...
I guess my siblings didn't want to live here as much as I thought.
Why on Earth would you think that?!
You'll be fine as long as you stop wanting to take a bath in a high-school girl's bathwater.

I started living with Hiro.
Hiro was way too into household chores.
Huh?
Time for dinner!
WHOOSH
Is this how mothers are?
It's so embarrassing.
I wanted to do my laundry separately, but it wasn't allowed due to water conservation.
I could only wash and dry my under-garments on my own.

I mean, he acts like he's my mom, after all.
Since we're childhood friends, almost like family, maybe it's not something to be embarrassed about.
ROLL
ROLL
Are moms...
...supposed to be a little overbearing?
Oh, I better memorize the rules.
...
FLUSH

My first...
...curfew!
ギューュュュQUEEE
ううEEE

You're home?
There's no need for you to stay home.
...I was in the way?
...feel like...
Did he ever...

ARGHHHHH!

...I've always been in the way.
Until now...

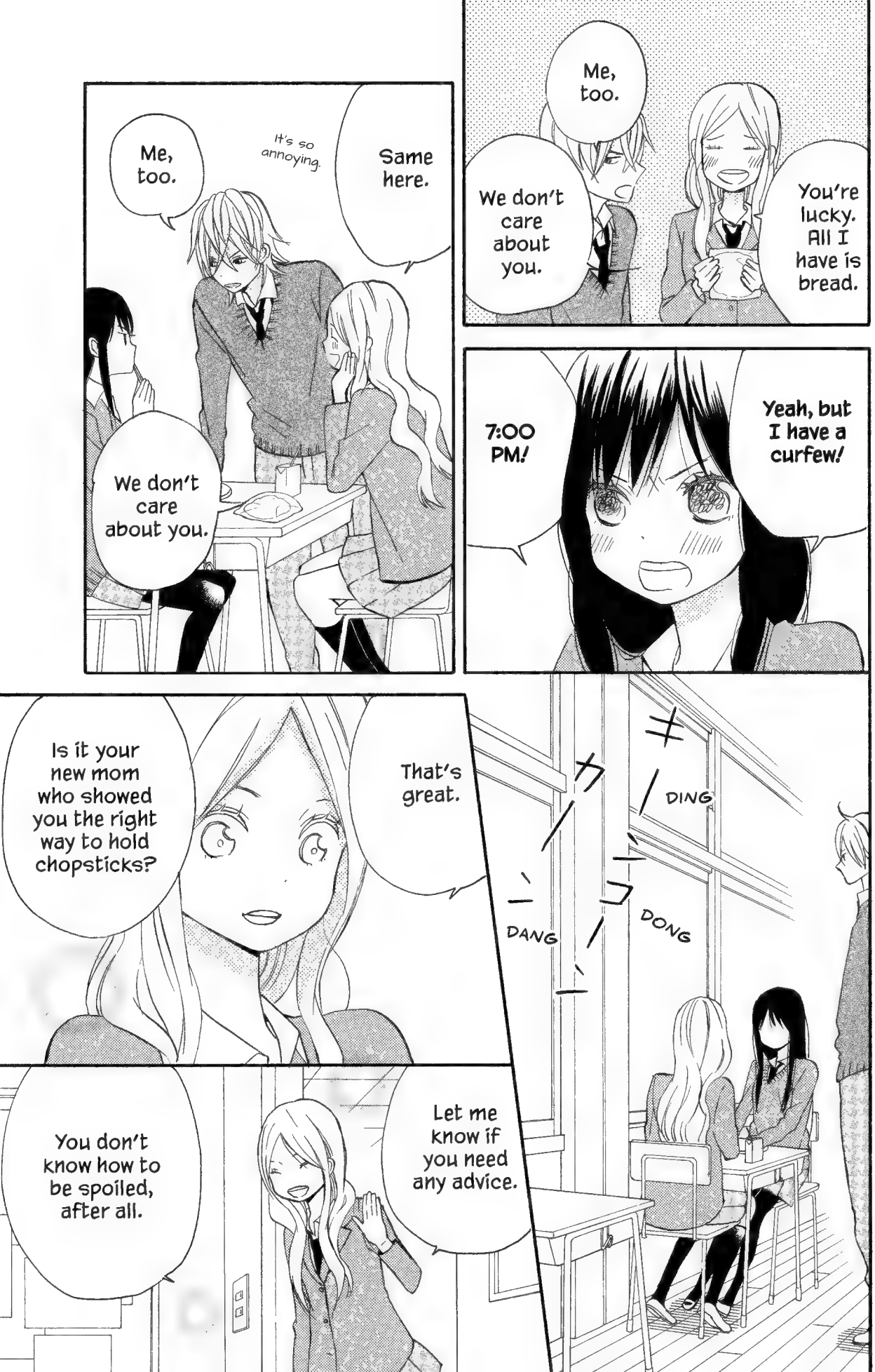
RUSTLE
ガサ
ガサ
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
ガサ

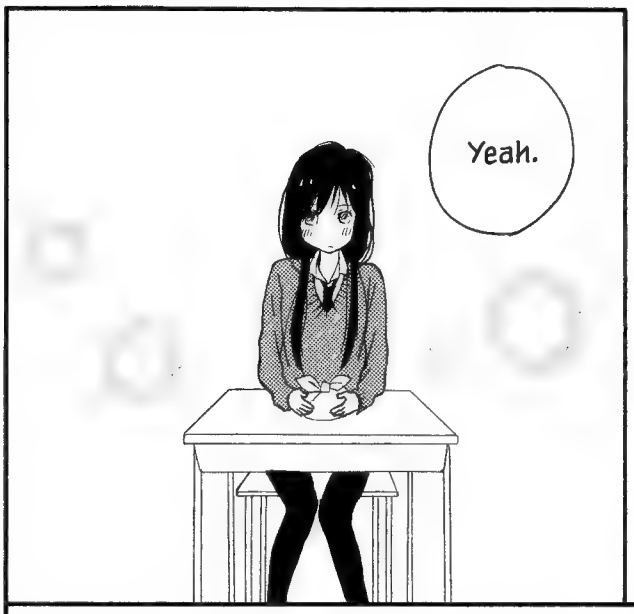
ACK!
The turtle's making noise.
How rude.
It didn't crawl in here?
The green turtle's name is Wakaba-chan.
He looks so sorrowful from behind...
It's so mean of you to treat her like a cock-roach or something.
Don't you agree, Wakaba-chan?
She's part of our family.
Saying sad things won't make me any happier.
Hiro, you were really lonely, huh?

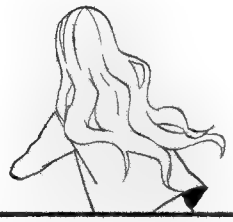
Mao!
The girls in my class are so tight with their old BFFs that it's hard to fit in.
I wonder if I can even make any friends.
Chi-chan.
It's finally lunch time! Let's eat together.
...
We're friends, after all.
Of course you can!
What's that supposed to mean?!

If only all three of us could've been in the same class.
Mao, you have to make friends in your class, too...
I better try harder, huh?
It can't be just the two of us eating lunch together forever.
Oh, right, you two are still in the same class.
Hang out?
Then we could hang out like we used to.
How cold. We totally hung out.

Huh?
He hits on all the girls!
Oda is quick to pounce, so don't pay him any attention.
Huh?
Motomiya, your lunch looks tasty.
SHOVE
Step away from Mao!
Owwww.
It was actually Hiro...
Y-yeah...
Wow! It does! Did your new mom make that?
B-but it's the left-overs from yesterday's cheap dinner!
Mao, you're all red!


Me, too.
We don't care about you.
You're lucky. All I have is bread.
Same here.
It's so annoying.
Me, too.
We don't care about you.
Yeah, but I have a curfew!
7:00 PM!
DING
DONG
DANG
That's great.
Is it your new mom who showed you the right way to hold chopsticks?
Let me know if you need any advice.
You don't know how to be spoiled, after all.





...at all.

I don't know my new mom...

The truth is...

I'm sorry.

I ended up moving in with my childhood friend, Takashi. Adding in his dog, Croquette, the three of us are now living together... But I wonder, am I really wanted here?

Your last update was amazing.
Your feelings touch me so deeply.
Don't you think your feelings for Takashi are love?
I have to say, I'm very curious...!

ざわ
CHATTER
CHATTER
ざわ
TAP TAP
カチカチ
Radical-san is reading too much into it.
It's not true. Takashi only feels like a mom to Kaoru.
カチカチ
TAP TAP
How should I answer...?

Yeah, everyone from class who can go is going, and we're gonna light last year's leftover fireworks.
A party?
...

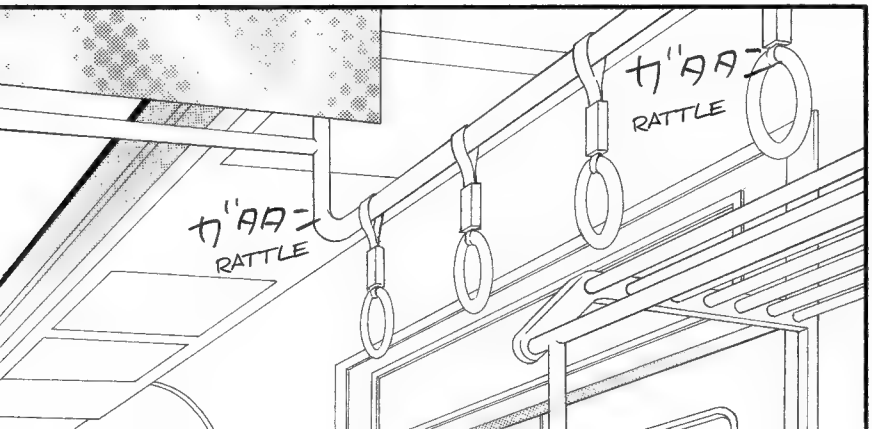
Do I have to go?
Every-one's going.
You gotta come, too.
...
Will it go later than 7:00 PM?
We're gonna light fireworks, so it has to be.
I'll be there!
Do you know how to get there?
No, I don't.
Then we'll go together.

Why?
Do you know anyone besides me in this class?
I hardly know you, though.
Hey!
Just come with me.
My class is having a fireworks party tomorrow, so I'm going.
I'll be back by 7:00 PM.
?
You can stay out later.

Is she about to reenact another period drama?
What?
Are you a child?
I said I'll be back by curfew!
I'll be home!
THUD
THUD
That's something you should ask a person.
Or this one?
Wakaba, this one?
I'm so happy.
Does a class get-together make her that happy?
She seems excited.

It makes me happy...

...to have to be back home at 7:00 PM.



So, Motomiya...
ガタン
RATTLE
Do you have a crush on someone?
A...
...crush...
...on someone?

RATTLE
ガタタン
I like Yashichi from Mito Komon.
RATTLE
ガタタン
I've never even thought about it.
Why is that?
...I guess.
It's a normal thing to ask...
I was asking for real.
Don't you think your feelings for Takashi are love?
Why is it different for me?

Hey, Oda-kun.
Oh! You came!
Make some friends, okay?
Hey, Moto-miya.
Let me see.
These are damp and won't light up.
I'm not angry.
You're not angry anymore?
About what?
Okay.

Making friends!
Looks like last year's fireworks don't work anymore, after all.
I wonder how late this party's gonna go.
Well, I have to go home at 7:00 PM.
Is that so? Your family is strict.
Yeah, they're really annoying about my curfew.
Huh?
Yeah... Sorry.
Sorry, I guess we shouldn't have invited you, huh?
Won't you get in trouble? Is it okay for you to be here?
Ugh...
That's not what I meant.
I guess it wasn't a good idea to do fireworks.

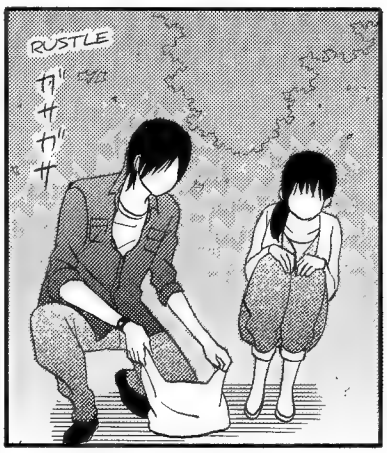
You really wanted to light some fireworks, huh?
Though they won't light...
Y-yeah.
Oh no! A cop...!
Hey!
Fireworks are prohibited here!
It's not even fireworks season! What are you doing?

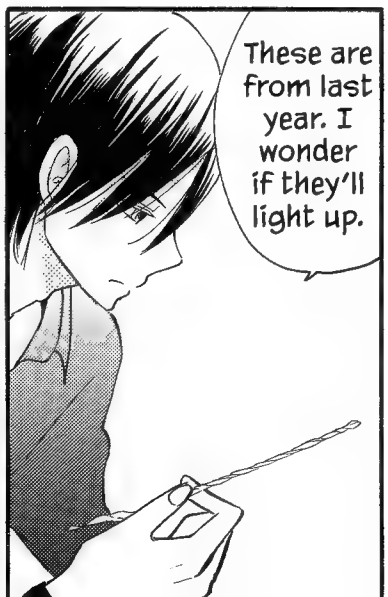
So...
...you're back at 5:00 PM?
That's good, since you wanted to be back by 7:00 PM, anyway.
...
That's what everyone said.
Is there a new period drama starting up?
That's not it.
...
Wanna go out then, Mao?
Huh?

Hey...
Where are we going?
And I'm hungry.
This is so annoying.

CLICK
カチッ
Sorry you gotta do a fireworks party with me instead of your classmates.
CLICK
カチッ
They won't light, after all.

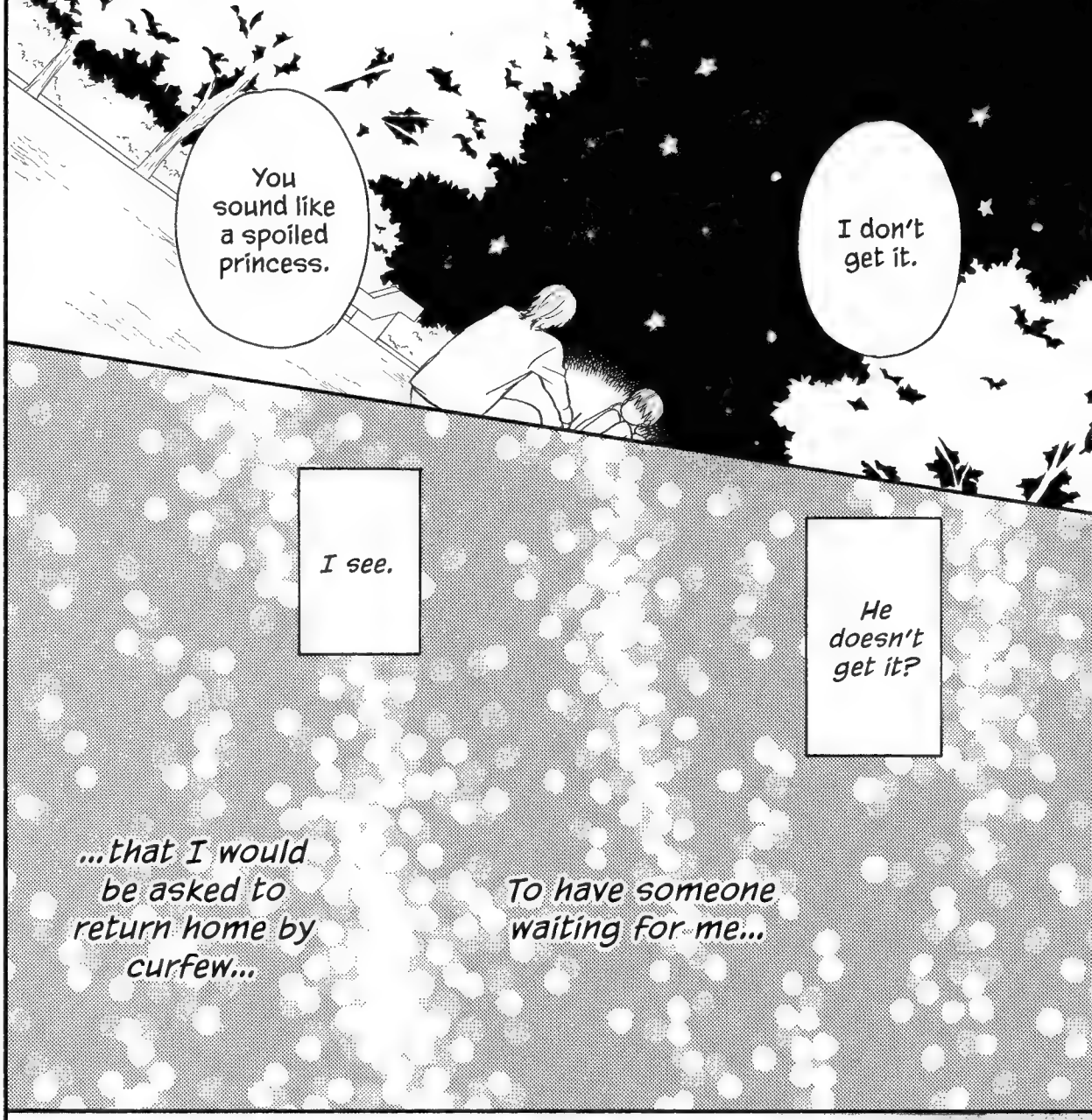
Fire-works!
...


RUSTLE
カサカサ


These are from last year. I wonder if they'll light up.

FLICKER
FLICKER
Got it.
FWSH
That's what happened earlier, too.
Year-old fireworks don't light up.
...
It's pretty.
It's not like I really wanted to light fireworks, though.

I just wanted to make curfew.
You always make curfew, Mao.
CLICK
カチッ
カチッ
CLICK
DROP
ぽと
That's not the point.


You sound like a spoiled princess.
I don't get it.
I see.
He doesn't get it?
...that I would be asked to return home by curfew...
To have someone waiting for me...
...it was a first.
For me...

Our curfew is at 7:00 PM, you know.
Hurry up.
All right! Let's clean up.
What? Already? We just got here!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
Yeah.

ぱん
SMACK
ぱん
SMACK
That's it.
What do you always pray for?
It won't come true if I tell you.
Whatever.
...
I pray that we all live together happily again.

You want everyone around making a mess?
Don't act stupid.
I wonder if he's happier living with me?
I'm saying it makes me happy to have someone say, "Welcome home."
No way...

That's too weird.
Are you saying it's not annoying to have me around?
And that it's not just that you like cleaning up after me?
Huh? Of course I don't like that.
Don't make me say it again.
You'll embarrass me.
...
Okay.
So he doesn't mind...
...having me around.

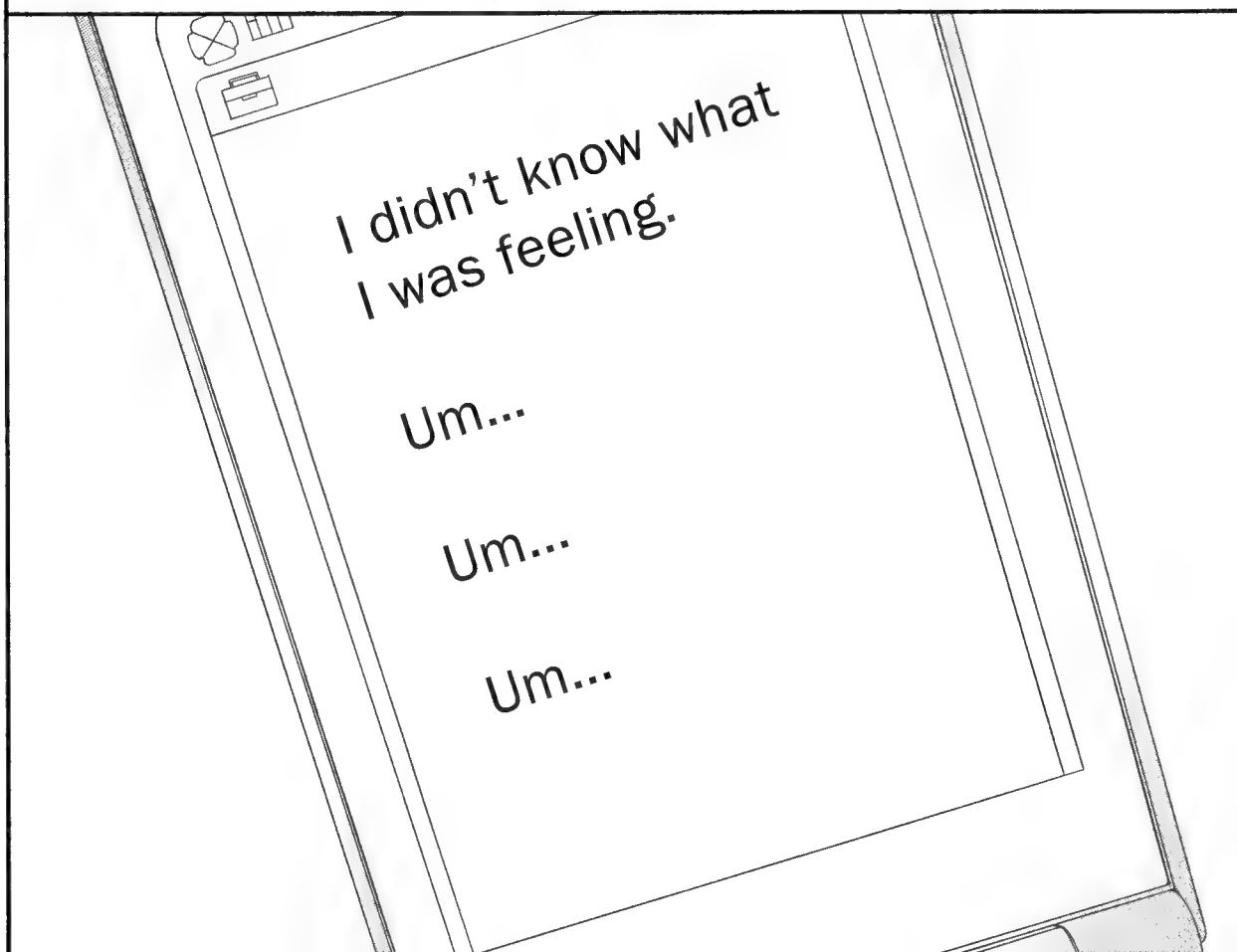
It's dark.

Huh?

...just because it's dark out?
...for two childhood friends to hold hands...
Is it normal...
Huh?

...held hands like this.

I think we always...

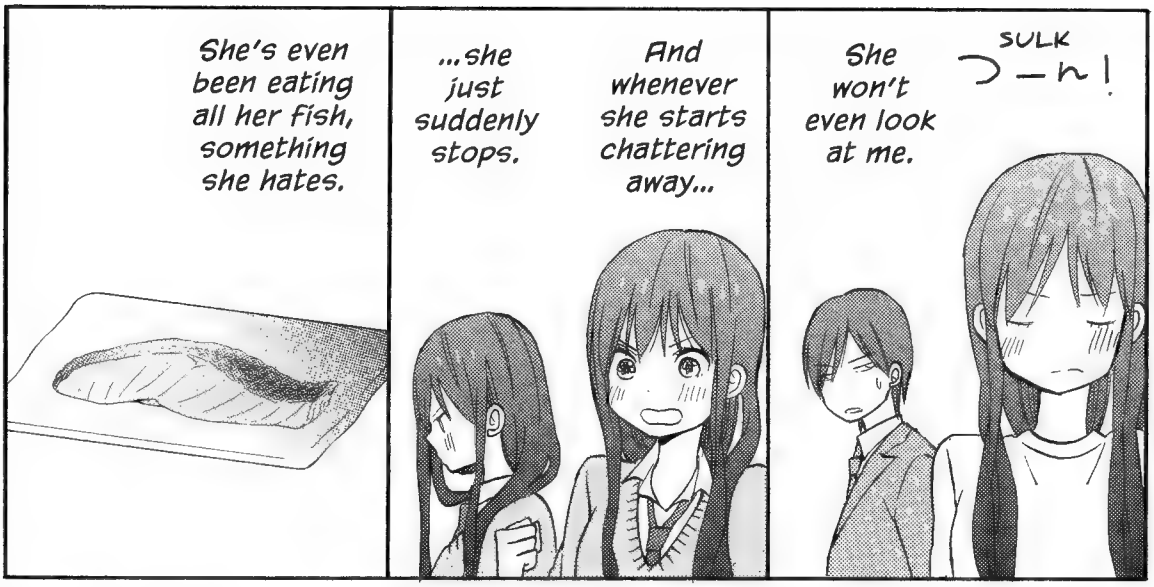


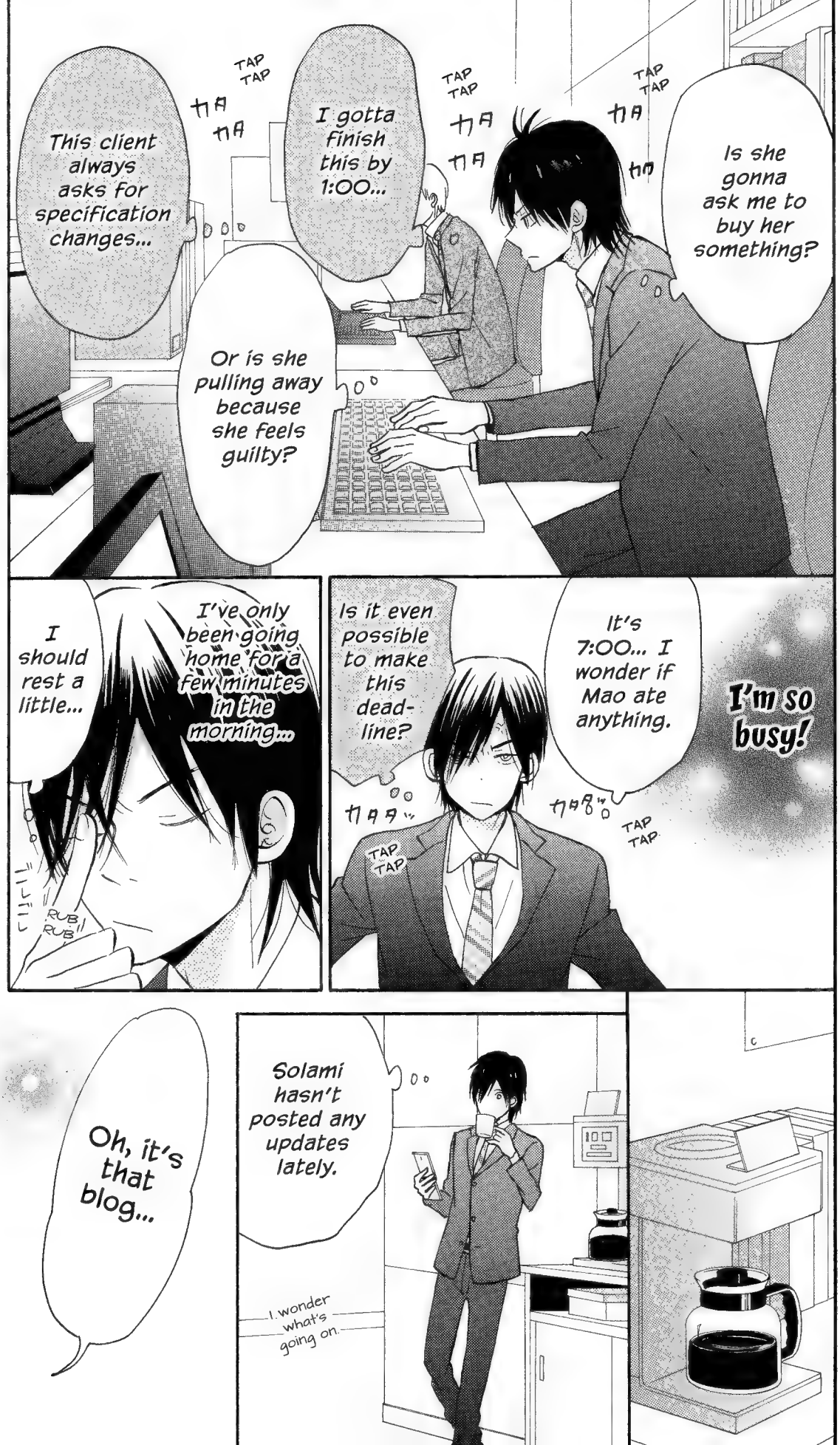
story 4

The Girl's Rebellion

...strange.

Mao seems...


She's even been eating all her fish, something she hates.
...she just suddenly stops.
And whenever she starts chattering away...
She won't even look at me.
SULK
つーん!


TAP TAP
This client always asks for specification changes...
I gotta finish this by 1:00...
Or is she pulling away because she feels guilty?
Is she gonna ask me to buy her something?
I've only been going home for a few minutes in the morning...
I should rest a little...
RUB RUB
Is it even possible to make this deadline?
It's 7:00... I wonder if Mao ate anything.
I'm so busy!
Solami hasn't posted any updates lately.
I wonder what's going on.
Oh, it's that blog...

I can't believe it... She must be weirded out by a man who reads online novels.
It's even worse because I'm really hoping that she's the one writing it!
Agh!
I was reading it for work, but it's surprisingly entertaining.
Did she see it?
Okay! I passed it off as nothing.
?

What was that?
ペコッ
BOW
TMP
タタタッ
TMP
TMP
I'm so happy.
What was that?
モヤモヤ
GLOOM
GLOOM
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
モヤ
GLOOM
モヤ
GLOOM
What was that?
What was that?
Calm down already~
No way... I'm imagining things because I haven't slept. That's what it is...
So it's not just wishful thinking... Was that supposed to mean that Sugimoto-san really is Solami-san?

CHIRP チュン…
CHIRP チュン
CRACK ユキ
The morning air feels so refreshing that it's almost painful.
I'm finally on my feet again.
It's making my eyes tear up.
ふぁ
YAWN
What are you doing here again?
You don't need to come home like this!

Good morning.
Breakfast is ready.
What are you doing making breakfast?
Aren't you super busy?
You just come home to eat and take a short nap, then you're off to work again!
You don't need to make me a lunch. I can have bread.
And I can make breakfast myself.
I don't think you can, actually.
Well, there's no need for you to force yourself to come home!
Since when were you so meek?
I'm not.

...
She's being strange, after all.
I'm just worried about you.
That's all.
Just let me make it.
I want to eat rice, too, you know.
And making you lunch saves on expenses.
PAT ぽん
So don't worry about me.
Don't touch me!!
Hey!

Thanks for the food.
I don't understand what's going on at all...
...
もく
CHOMP
もく
CHOMP
Why does it look like she's about to cry?
When she wants to cry...
...she's so bad at hiding it.
What's with her?

...would be sad.
Not eating together...
We live together, after all.
But I am.
I hate it when you act like you're taking care of me.
Totally.
RUB RUB
When will they be back?
It'll get worse when Daiki and Hina come back here.
You should admit defeat for now.

I don't know. I want us all to live together, but I have no idea what they want.
And they've gotten used to their current living arrangements.
Did you tell them?
That you want everyone to live together...
Unless you tell them directly...
...they won't know.

But I wasn't insistent.
I think I did...
I just assumed they wanted to live with me, too.
Have I never told them?
Thanks.
It was delicious.
Thanks for the food.
...it's really...
I didn't say it before, but...
...eating together like this...

See you later.
I'm going to get dressed!
...
Huh?
I guess I better talk to Daiki and Hina.
Oh, right...
I better tell them about Mao, too.
I'll do it another day.

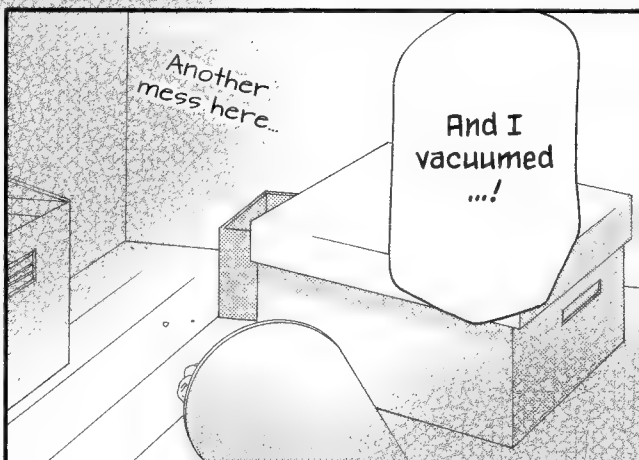
A LITTLE OFF

I made breakfast this morning!
It's much better this time...!
Yeah, but it still looks pretty burnt...

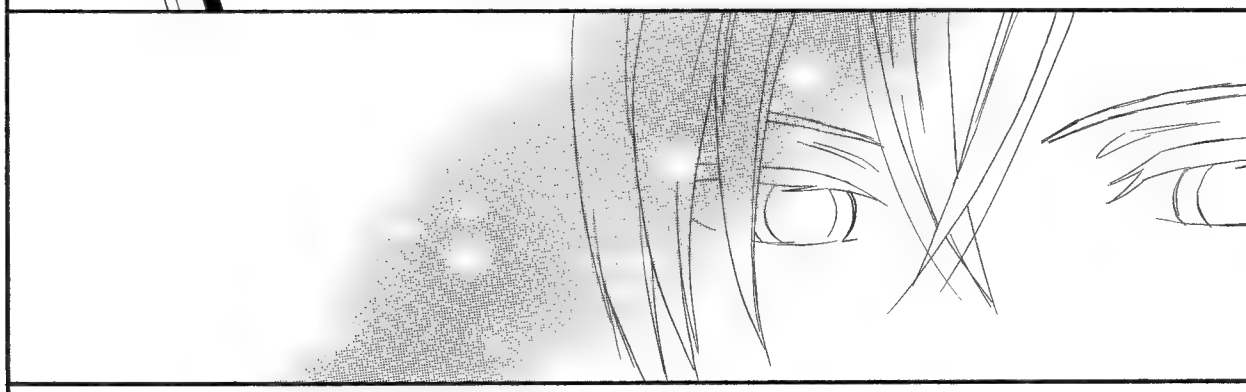
Welcome home!
What's that?
I'm home ...

There's more?!
And...

I did the laundry, too.
There's a mess here...


Another mess here...
And I vacuumed ...!

What time did you wake up? It's barely 6:00 now.
Go back to sleep while I make breakfast.
So what part of this do you consider a success?
You should've just bought one to begin with...
I tried making a lunch, too, but it didn't work out, so I bought one.
See you later!
Okay, bye.
There's no need...
I'm already wide awake.
STARE STARE
ギン ギン
Then just watch me.
Hey!
No way, she forgot the lunch she bought!
...for her to do this stuff.



Just a little.

I'm texting family, but it's been so long I feel kind of nervous.

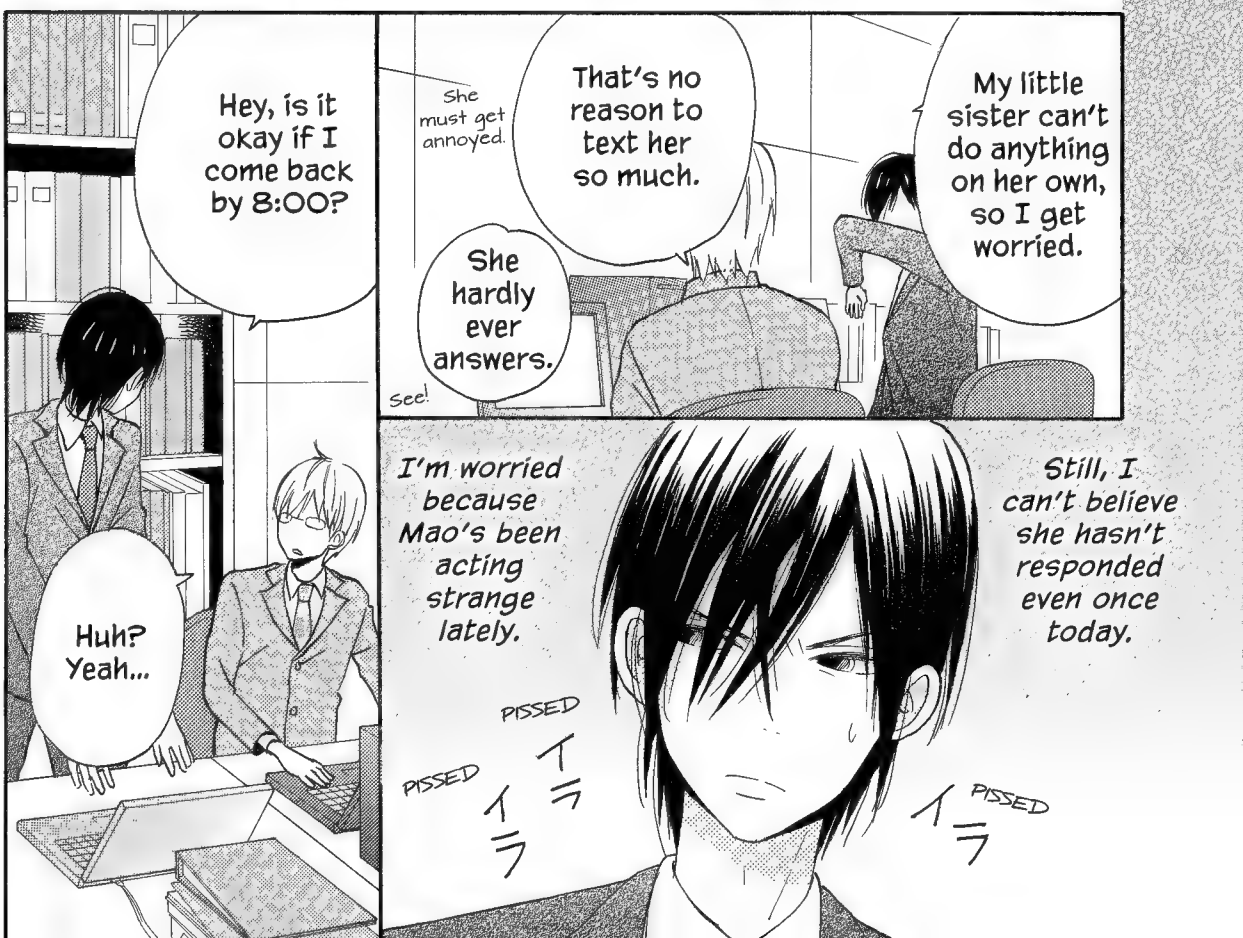
MESSAGE
To DAIKI
To HINA
Sub SUBJECT
ATTACHMENT
CONTENTS
It's been a while. How are you doing?

It's ridiculous.
I'm back! I got your message!
TMP
TMP
TMP

...or do anything.
...or fry up eggs...
There's no need to wake up early...
It's fine.
That's why...
...is somehow comforting.
Just having you around...
...I want to come home.
You know that, right?

ヒ"ヒ" BZZ
ヒ"ヒ" BZZ
ヒ" BZZ
ヒ" BZZ
...
Ugh...
Mao?
What?! It's so late!

SLUGGISH
SLUGGISH
SLUGGISH
There's a bag check, too, so we can't go home.
And who knows when the client will ask for something else.
I'm so sleepy...
I can't take it... I really can't take it...
SLUGGISH
SLUGGISH
SLUGGISH
I didn't even take a bath yesterday.
My head is itchy.
That's right, so you can't go home until the first morning train.
Exactly.


My little sister can't do anything on her own, so I get worried.
That's no reason to text her so much.
She must get annoyed.
She hardly ever answers.
See!
Still, I can't believe she hasn't responded even once today.
I'm worried because Mao's been acting strange lately.
PISSED
PISSED
PISSED
Hey, is it okay if I come back by 8:00?
Huh? Yeah...

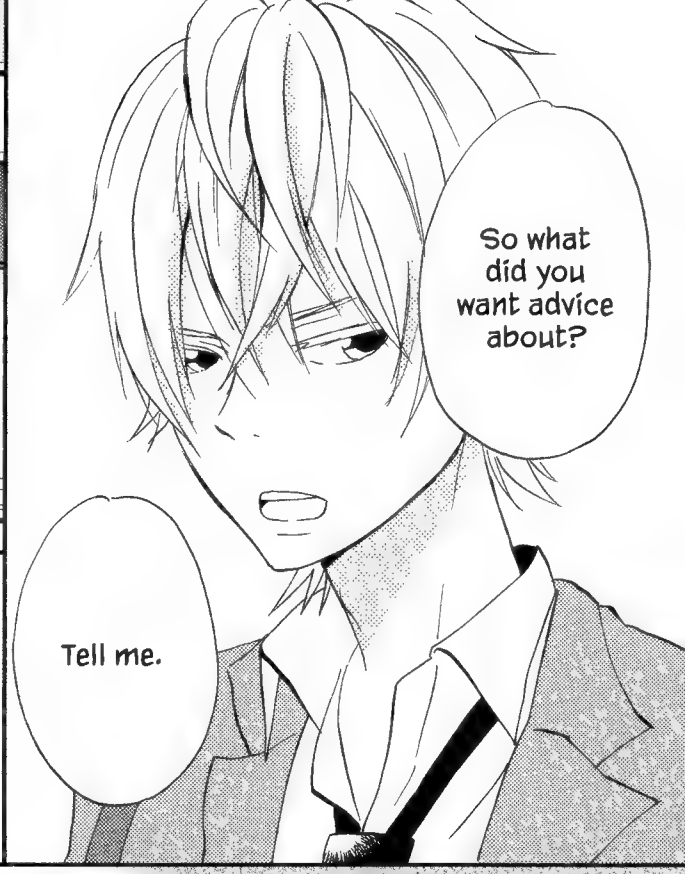
I'll grab a bite to eat at home and come right back!
What? Hey...
RATTLE
ガタタン
I don't have much time, so I'll just buy something.
RATTLE
ガタタン
RATTLE
ガタタン
I better text Mao that I'm coming home.
Four cream puffs, please.
Mito Komon is on today.
We can't watch it together...
It's too bad.

Ma—
I better not bother her.
More importantly...

Who's that guy?
What's going on?
I get it...
I should back off.
I'll go home before she notices me.

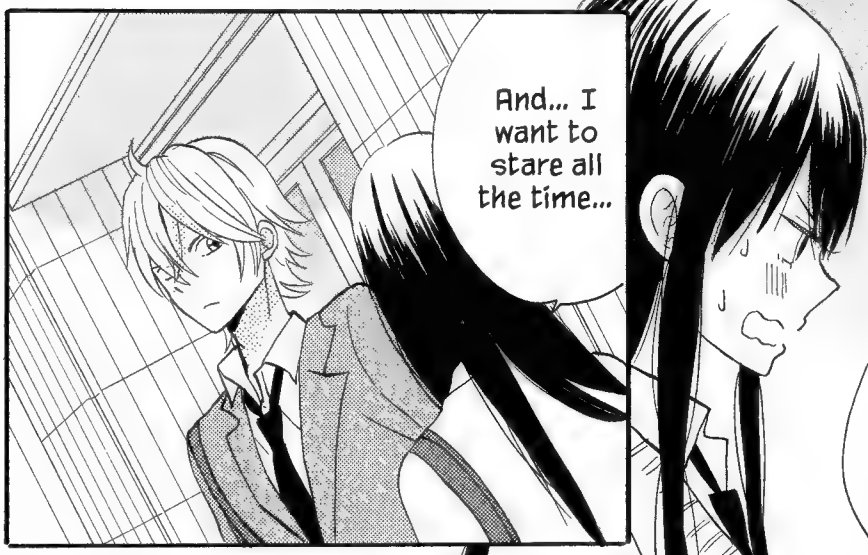
Well, actually, it's about Hiro.
I-it's about my mom...

Are you sure I'm the right person to talk to about this?
Oh, I heard your dad got re-married.


So what did you want advice about?
Tell me.

Am I getting the wrong impres-sion...?

Okay.
Yeah...


And... I want to stare all the time...
I used to think it was normal to hold hands until recently...
But now it makes my heart race.

Huh?
And I want to be held.
We live together, so is it weird that I feel this way?
Weird?
Sounds like a love story.

It does, huh...
But since it's your mom, it's not a love thing.
It's been a long time since you had a mom, right?
Why don't you just explain it her?
I've always had my parents, so I don't really know much about this.

But I think it's great that you want to be closer.
What's wrong?
I don't know.

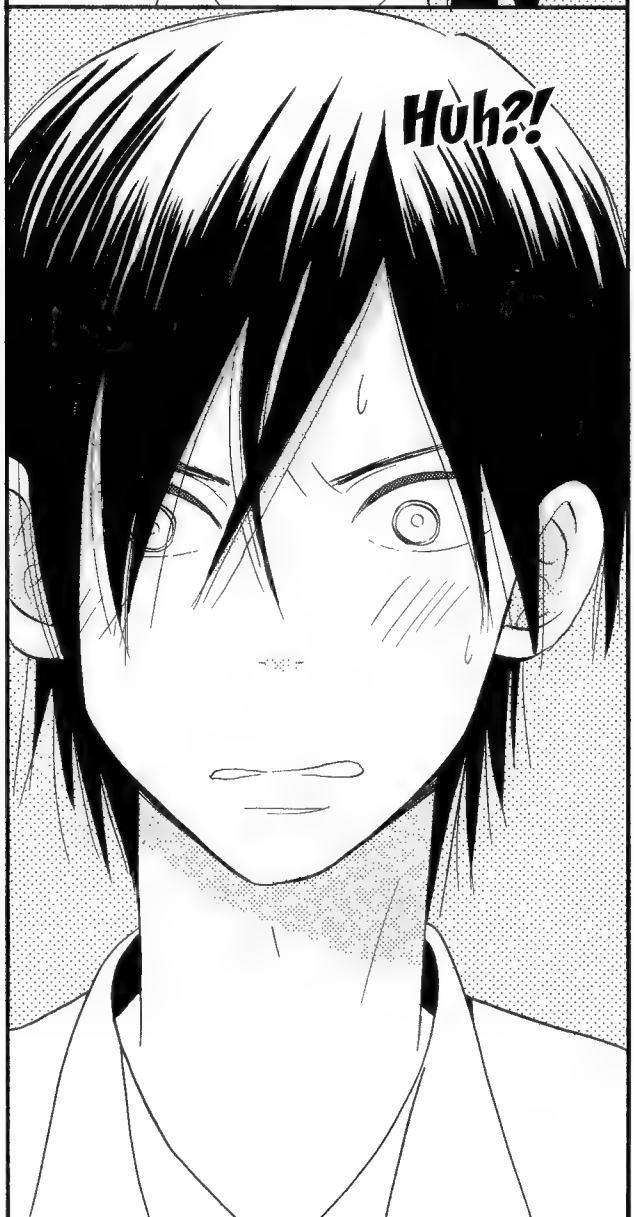
I hope you guys get along great.

I'm home.

BADUMP
BADUMP
ドキドキ
BADUMP
You want me to tell you now?
I'm home!
You should tell me if you're home!
ドキ
BADUMP
Dinner is ready.
SMIRK
SMIRK
SMIRK
SMIRK
SHOCK
びくっ
Huh? What?
You finished early today?
No, I gotta go back to work.
I was worried about you, but...
But since you have a boyfriend, I'm a little relieved.
It's fine if you don't come home.

SMIRK
I saw you, Magyo.
You were walking with a boy.
SMIRK
?
SMIRK
SMIRK
SMIRK
!!
Was that your boy-friend?
No way!
Are you guys gonna date, then?
That's not what that was at all!
SMIRK
SMIRK
There's no reason to hide it from me. You like him, right?
Hiro, you're being such a dad right now!
I am.

...
Seriously, you should introduce me.
You wouldn't want him to get the wrong idea about us.
But I like you, Hiro...!

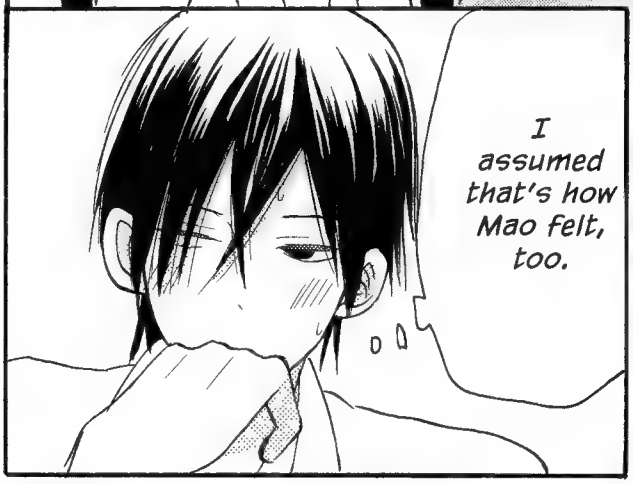


Huh?

I mean, saying you like me? **Me?!**

...

How about it?
Anyway, are you gonna eat?
It's takeout, though.


I assumed that's how Mao felt, too.

Until now...

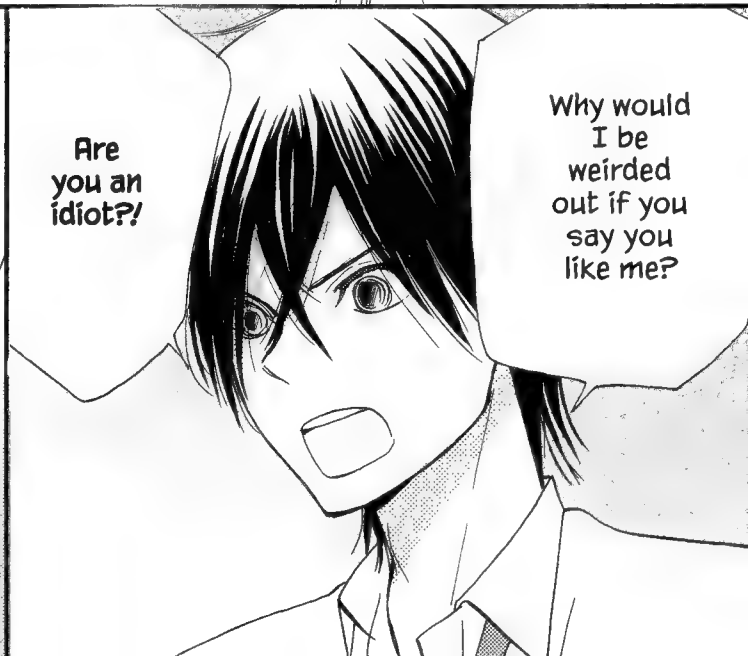
...I never saw Mao as anything more than a sister.

What should I do? She isn't talking...
I know!

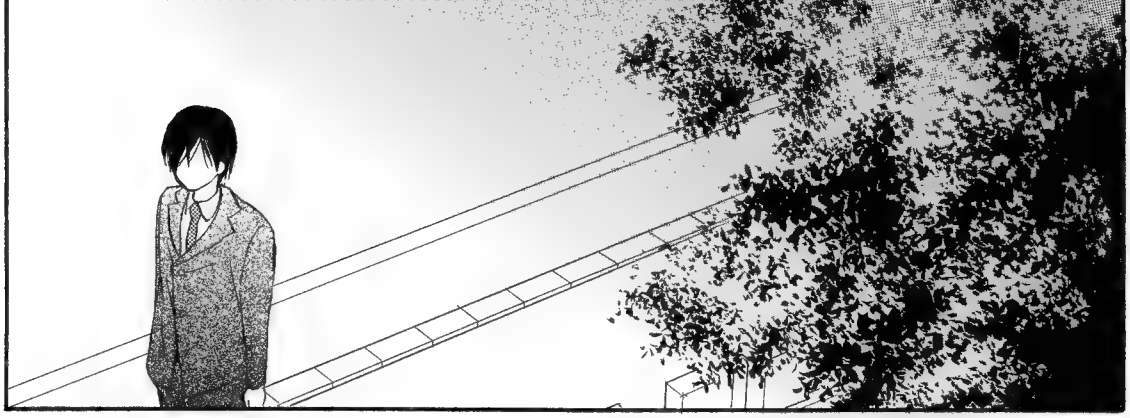
Thank you.
I didn't get a reply yet, but I feel lighter somehow.
Thanks to you, Mao, I was able to text Daiki and Hina.
Say something...
...
Is it okay for me to live with you?
I guess she was joking about liking me, after all...

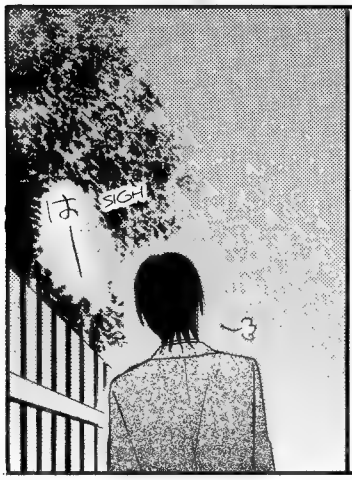
Huh?
If you're worried about Daiki and Hina, there's still no telling when they'll come back.
Not that...
Aren't you weirded out by me?

Of course it's okay.


Are you an idiot?!
Why would I be weirded out if you say you like me?

This is the only place I can go home to.
I'm glad.
...definitely tops the list.
...the fact that she cries a lot...
Okay.
See you later.
Of all the things I've learned about Mao since she moved in...





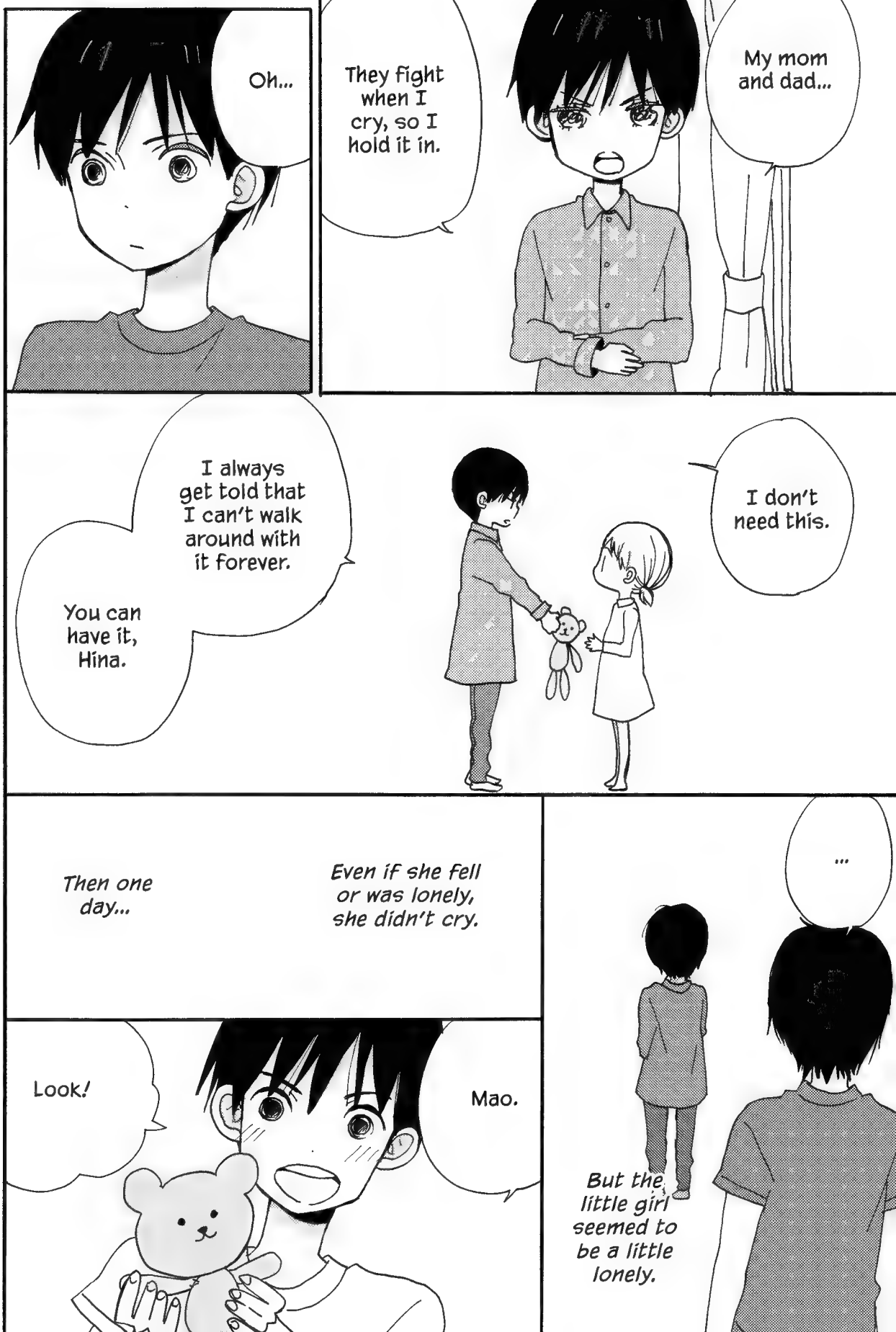
What should I do now?

Frm DAIKI
Sub It's been a long time.
I was planning on going back home on my next school break, but I'm against Mao living in our house.

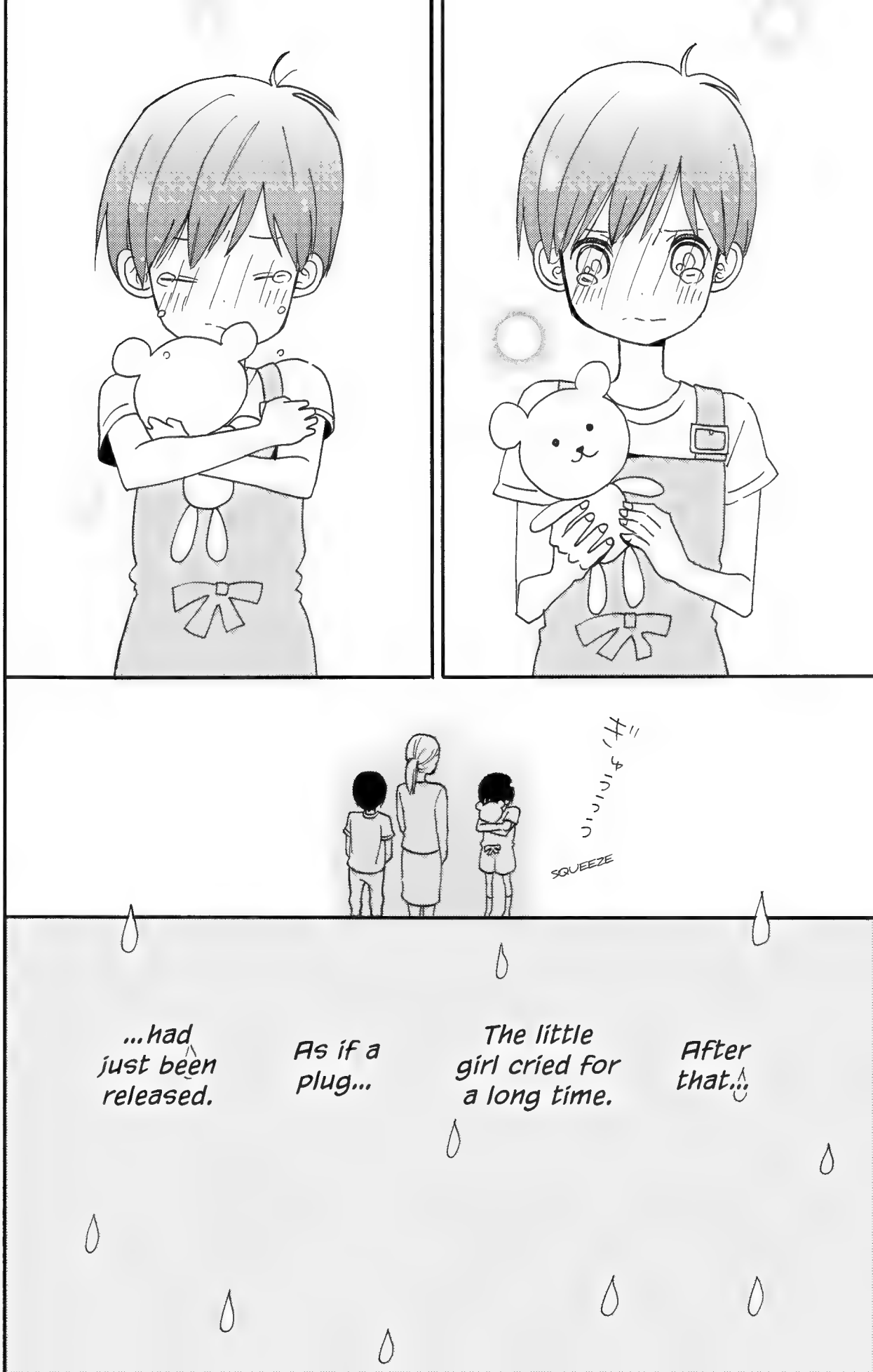
Well, then...

To be continued...

There was once a little girl who never cried.
Even when she got lost or when her goldfish died, she didn't cry.
EXTRA CHAPTER
The Girl Who Never Cried
I'm fine.
Are you okay? Wasn't that teddy bear important to you?
You need to apologize.
BWA BWA BWA
Hina, it's because you wanted it so badly that this happened.
Even when the only teddy bear her dad ever bought her was ripped, she didn't cry.
Mao, your heart must be made of steel.

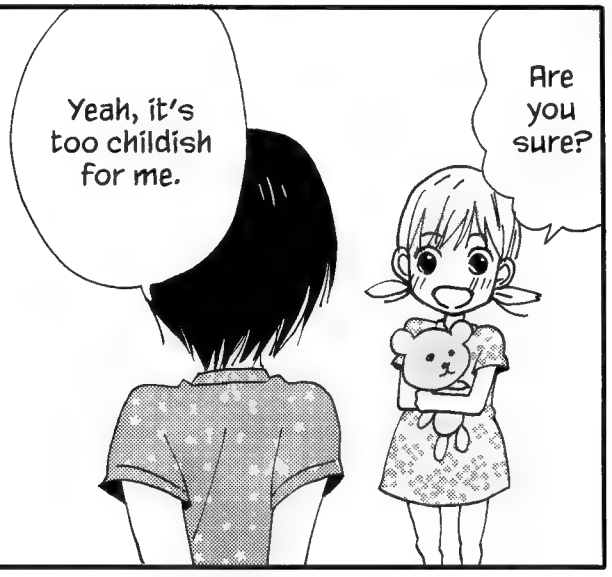

My mom and dad...
They fight when I cry, so I hold it in.
Oh...
I don't need this.
I always get told that I can't walk around with it forever.
You can have it, Hina.
...
But the little girl seemed to be a little lonely.
Even if she fell or was lonely, she didn't cry.
Then one day...
Mao.
Look!

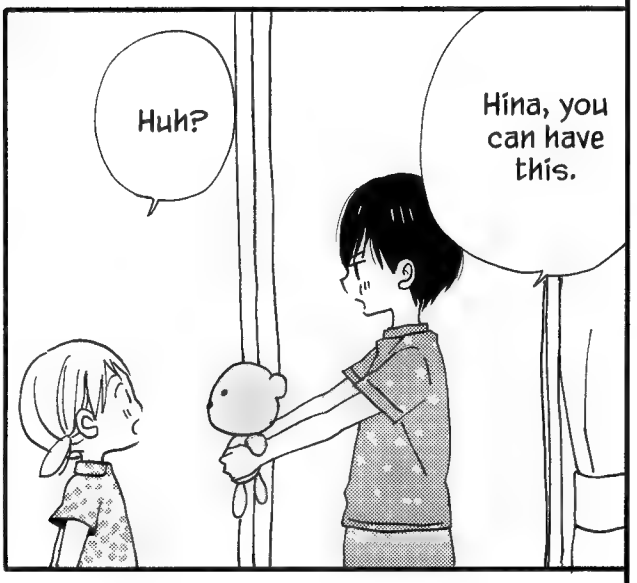
What?
I don't need it.
My mom fixed it for you!
Aren't you happy?!
He's taken good care of it until now, so please continue to treat it well.
Mao-chan.
Isn't that great?
Hina was even able to hold back her tears so you wouldn't get sad.


SQUEEZE
...had just been released.
As if a plug...
The little girl cried for a long time.
After that...

And she also started to laugh a little more.

The little girl was able to cry a little after that.





She wasn't lonely anymore.

Take good care of it.

End of extra chapter

I have her wearing a blazer,
but I also like sailor uniforms.
I like uniforms.
And also tights.

Please read the next volume, too!
-Taamo

What happens after Mao tells Hiro she likes him...?

She tries to hold back her feelings in order to continue living together, but...

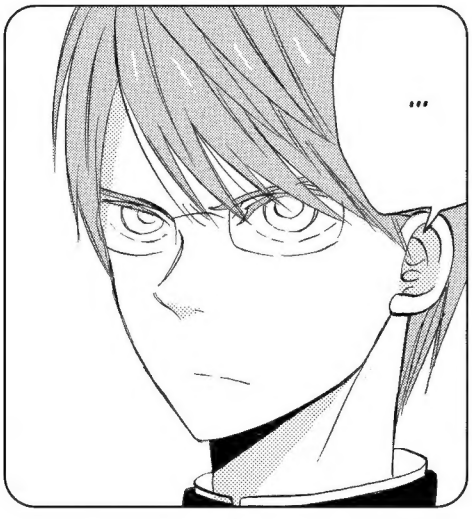
She can't hold back her feelings, after all!

Hello! This is Radical. I can't believe I'm going to meet you! I'm so happy. I'll be carrying a black bag.
Confused, Mao goes to meet Radical-san, a reader of her online novel.

It's not something I can talk about with Chi-chan. It's easier with Radical-san because I don't really know her.
It's the first time I'm gonna talk about love.

Mao starts to feel a little more at ease...

However...!



Hiro's little brother Daiki returns home.

Is a storm brewing?!

HOUSE of the SUN 2

Popular right now!

House of the Sun 1

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